もののけ草紙

四

高橋 葉介

yousuke Takahashi

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あの負け戦の置き土産は

人でない奴らの集う街、

そこに行きたくや

小兎を呼びな。

喪くした記憶も蘇える上がる

怪異面妖ワンダーホラー！

the non-humans.

call the little rabbit.

MONONOKEZOUSHI

YOUSUKE TAKAHASHI

高橋葉介のA5判コミックス
定価：本体各1200円＋税

「もののけ草紙」壱

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好評発売中！

もののけ草紙 四
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ものの什草子

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Mononoke Soushi [4]

Takahashi Yousuke

MONONOKE SOUSHI 4

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Takahashi Yousuke 高橋葉介

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Chapter 25: Extra Story—Fairy Tale

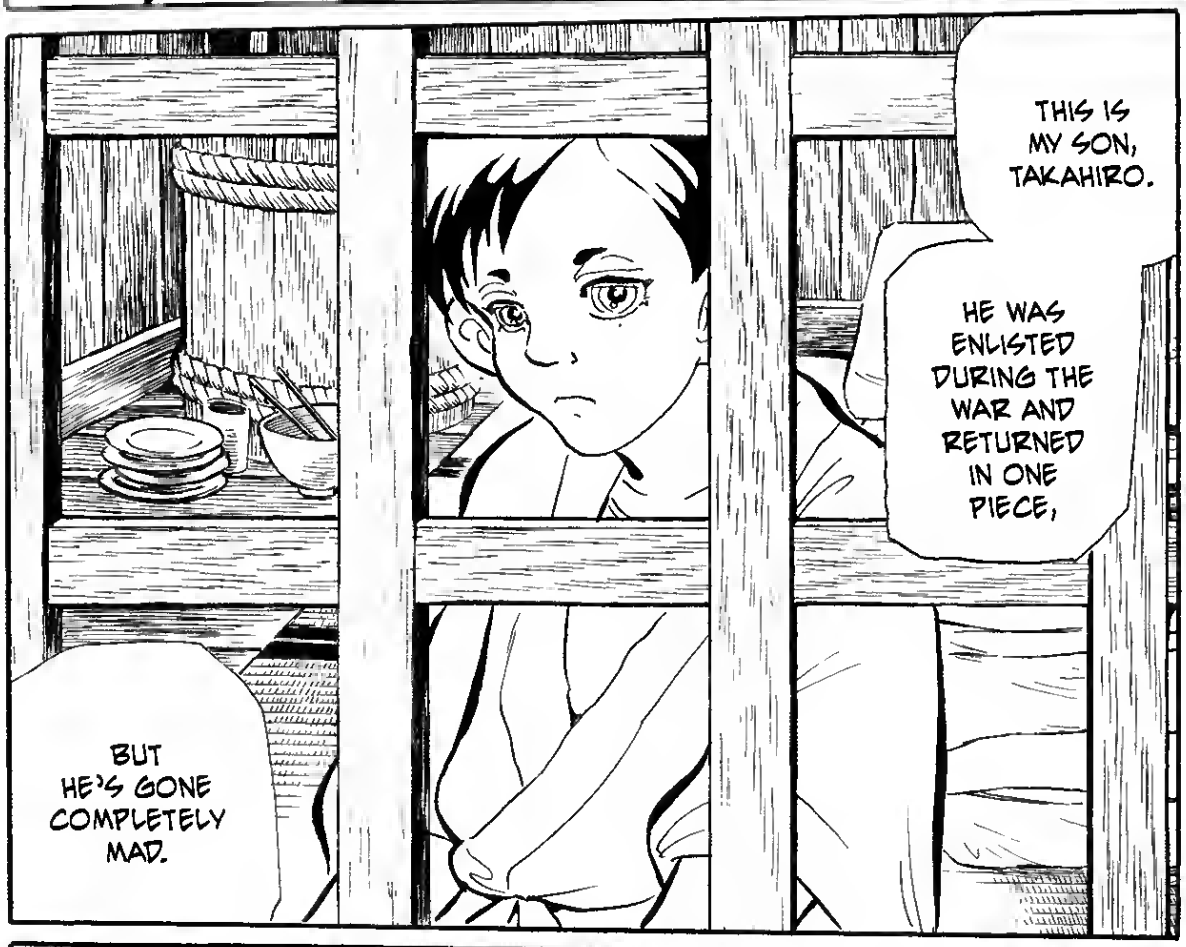
WERE YOU RESTING, ANEGO?
HEY!
I JUST GOT BACK.

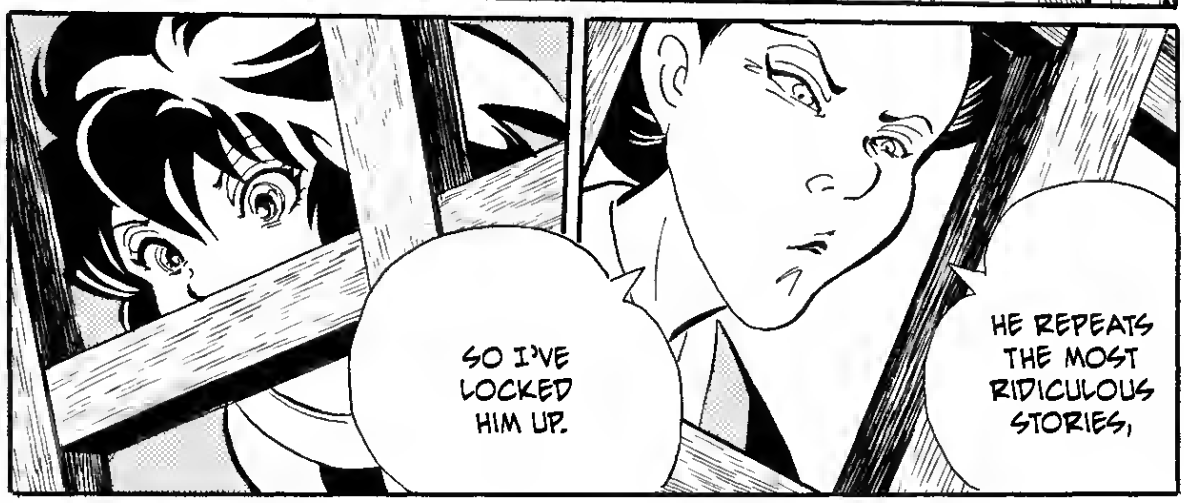
OH, YOU WERE PREPARING A MEAL?
THANKS.
EH? OH... THE JOB?
FLUFFED IT, I'M AFRAID.
I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT AFTER EATING.
"TELL ME NOW?" YOU'RE SO IMPATIENT, ANEGO.

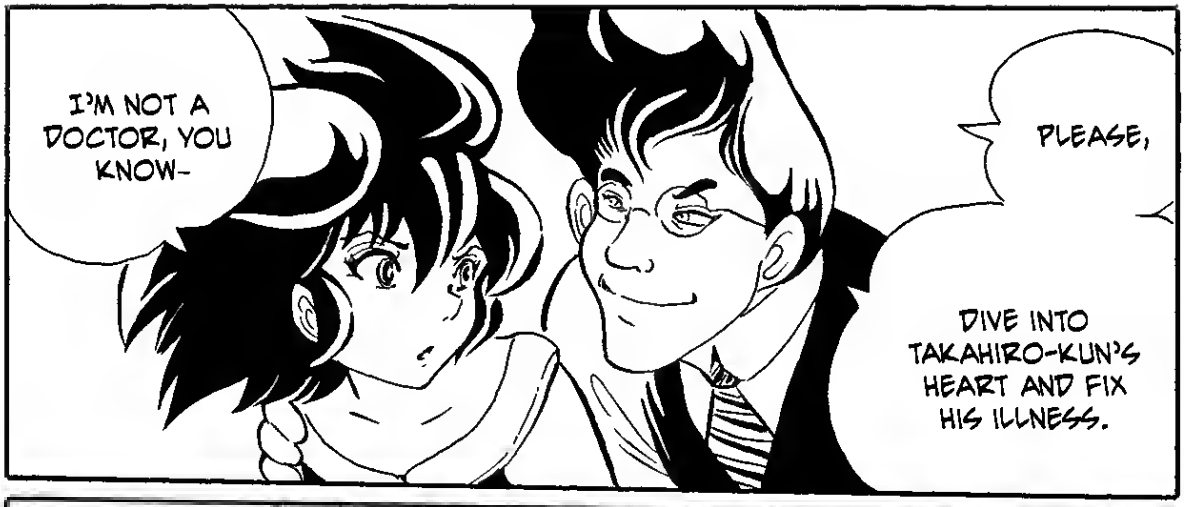
THERE WAS THIS MANSION LEFT UNTOUCHED BY THE AIR RAIDS.
I WAS INVITED THERE.
AN ENTER-TAINER?
TWITCH
I'M THE ENTERTAINER, SHAO TSU.
GOOD DAY TO YOU.

NOW DON'T BE HASTY, NEE-SAN.
THIS GIRL MIGHT BE USEFUL.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, YUKIHIRO?
I ONCE CALLED HER TO PERFORM AT A RESTAURANT.
SHE PUT ON QUITE A SHOW,
BUT APPARENTLY SHE CAN ALSO DIVE INTO PEOPLE'S HEARTS.
I'LL BET SHE CAN HEAL TAKAHIRO-KUN'S ILLNESS.
HMPH...!

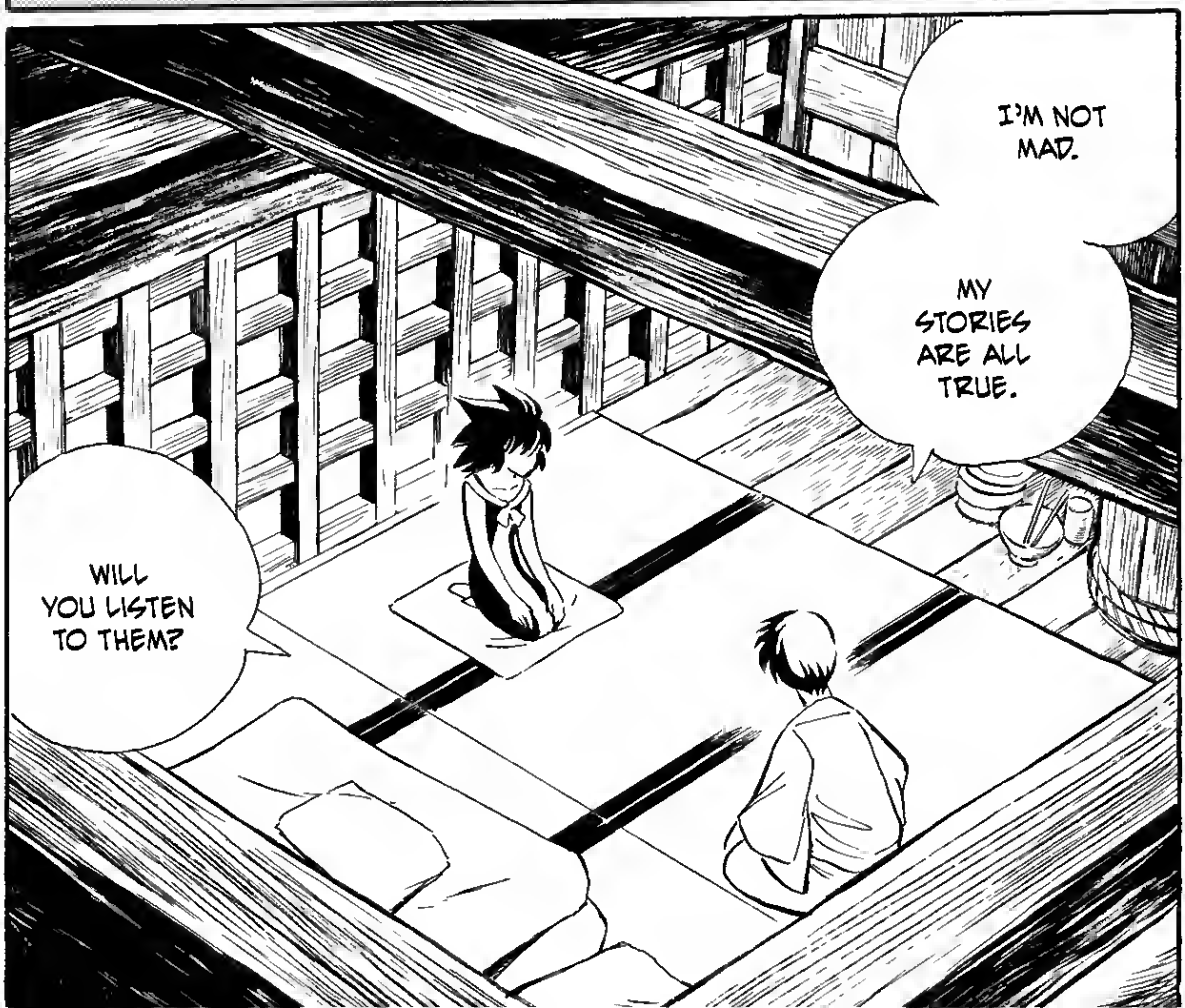
...ILLNESS, YOU SAY?

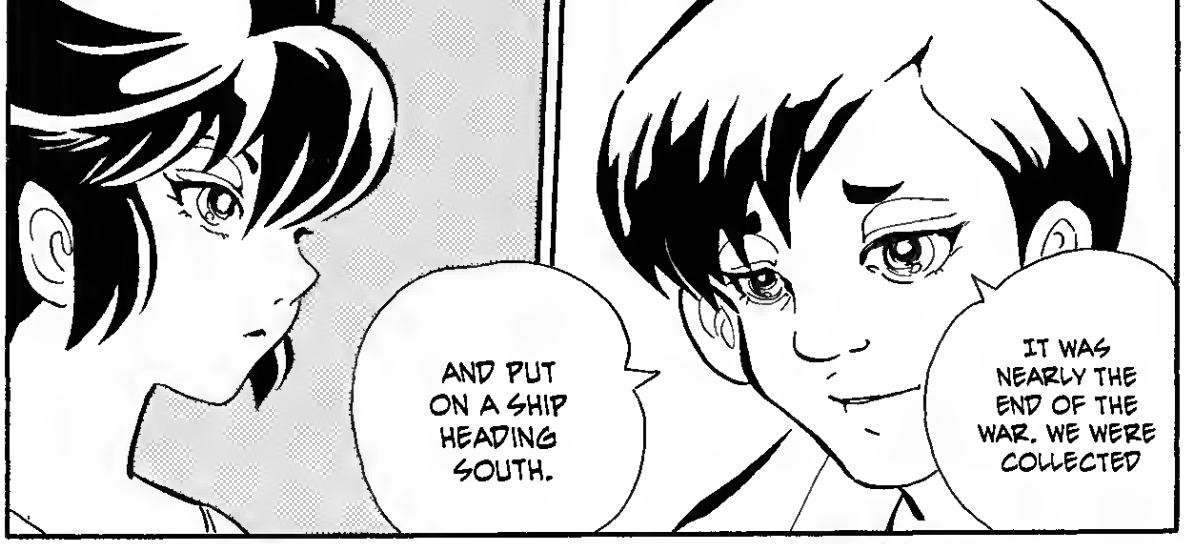

THIS IS MY SON, TAKAHIRO.
HE WAS ENLISTED DURING THE WAR AND RETURNED IN ONE PIECE,
BUT HE'S GONE COMPLETELY MAD.

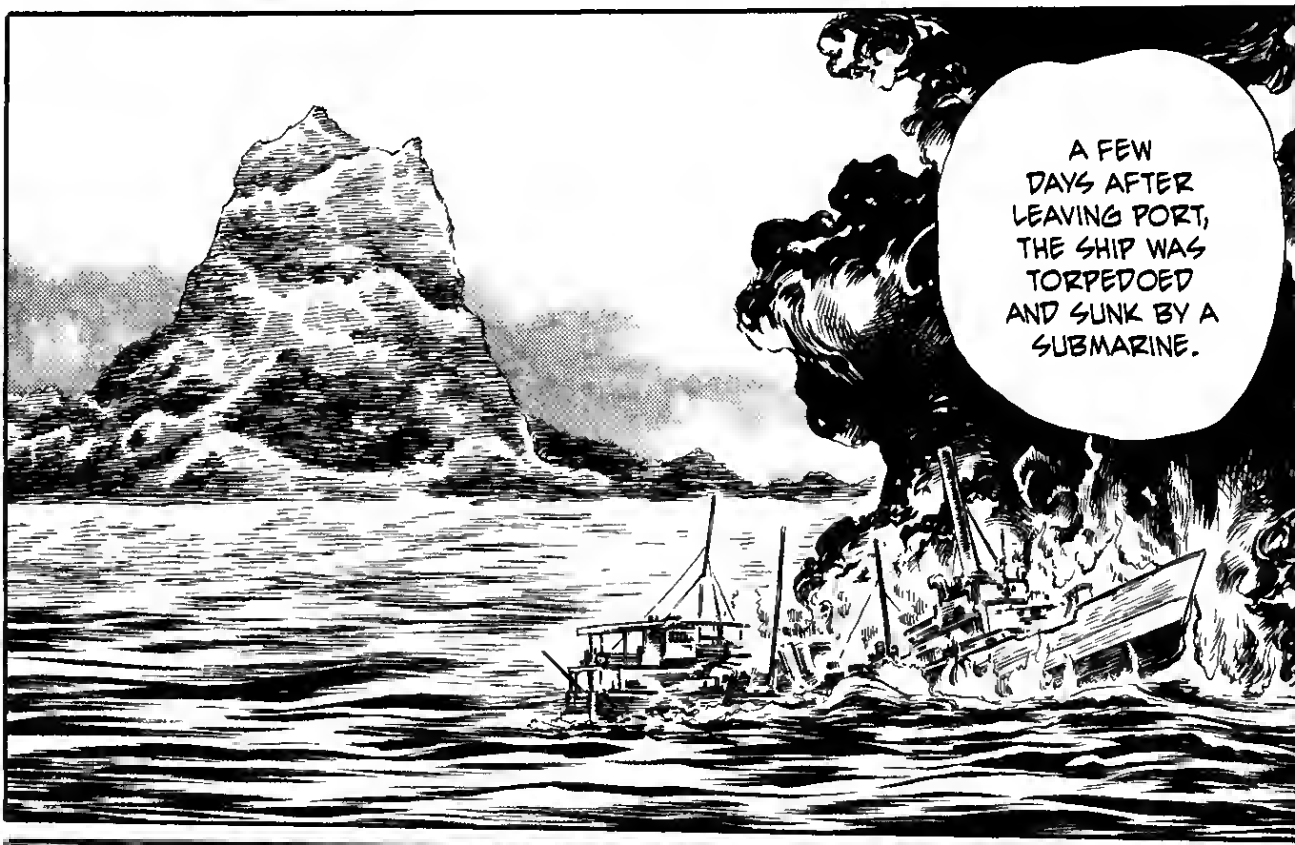

SO I'VE LOCKED HIM UP.
HE REPEATS THE MOST RIDICULOUS STORIES,


I'M NOT A DOCTOR, YOU KNOW-
PLEASE,
DIVE INTO TAKAHIRO-KUN'S HEART AND FIX HIS ILLNESS.

PLEASE LEAVE US ALONE TOGETHER.
BUT WE'LL SEE.


I'M NOT MAD.
MY STORIES ARE ALL TRUE.
WILL YOU LISTEN TO THEM?

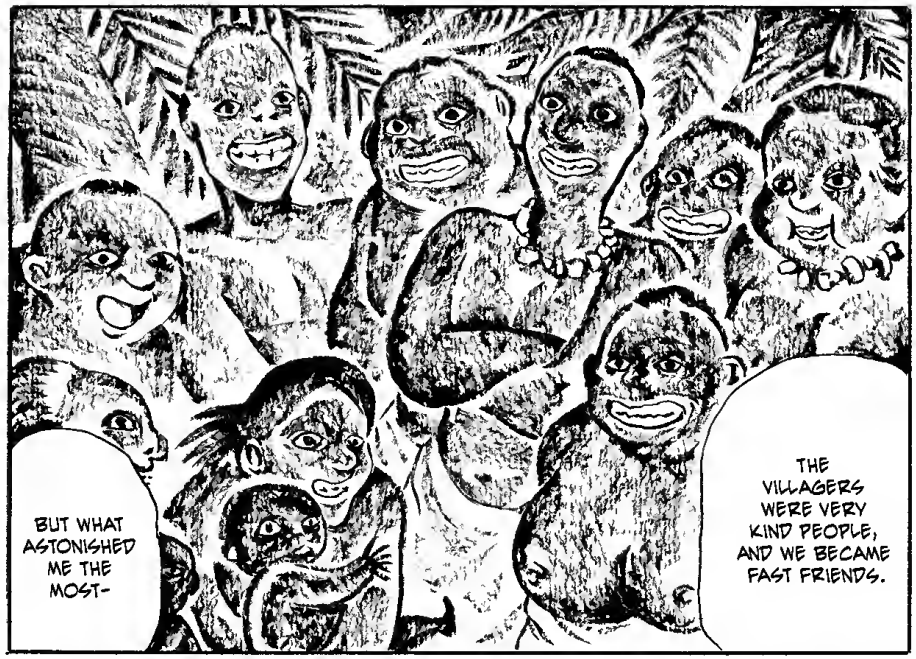

IT WAS NEARLY THE END OF THE WAR. WE WERE COLLECTED
AND PUT ON A SHIP HEADING SOUTH.


A FEW DAYS AFTER LEAVING PORT, THE SHIP WAS TORPEDOED AND SUNK BY A SUBMARINE.

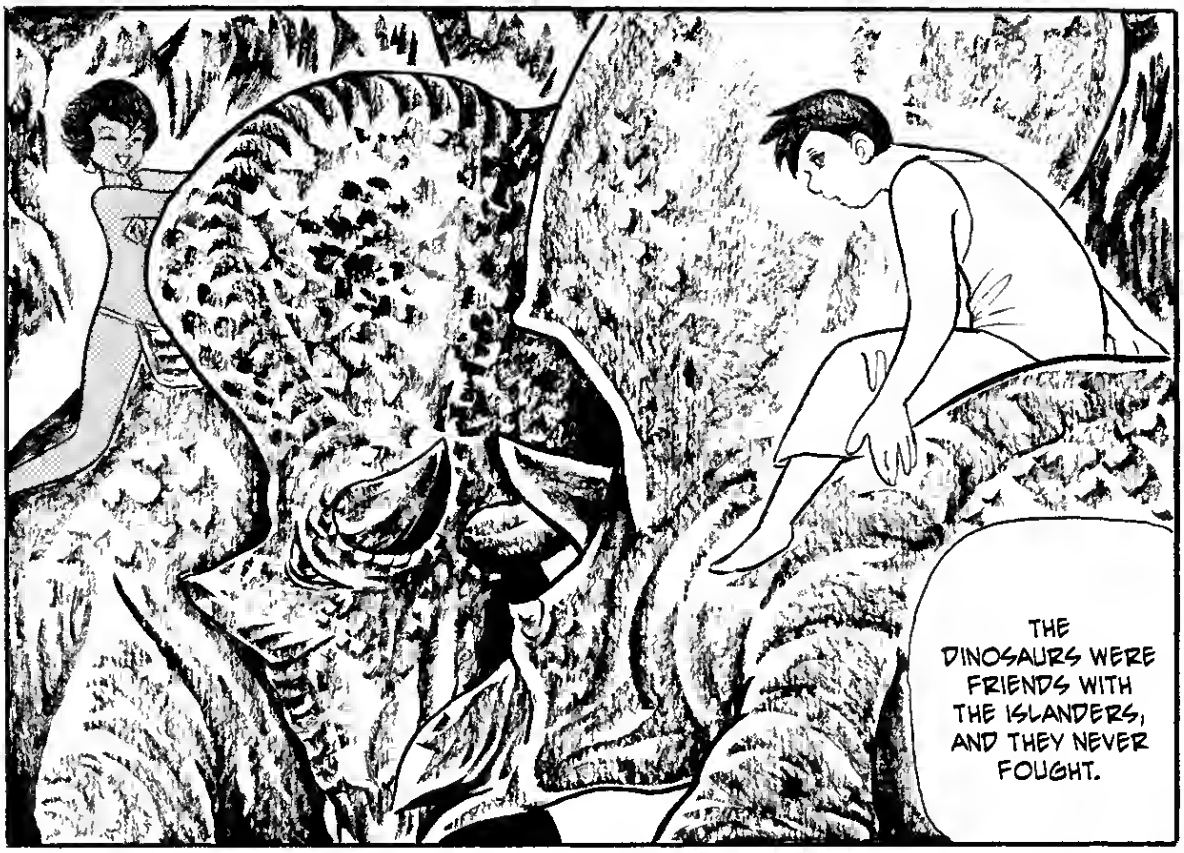
WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS LYING ON AN ISLAND SHORE.
RUSTLE

SHE WAS A NATIVE OF THIS ISLAND,
AND LED ME TO HER VILLAGE.
THERE WAS A DARK-SKINNED ANGEL STANDING NEXT TO ME.

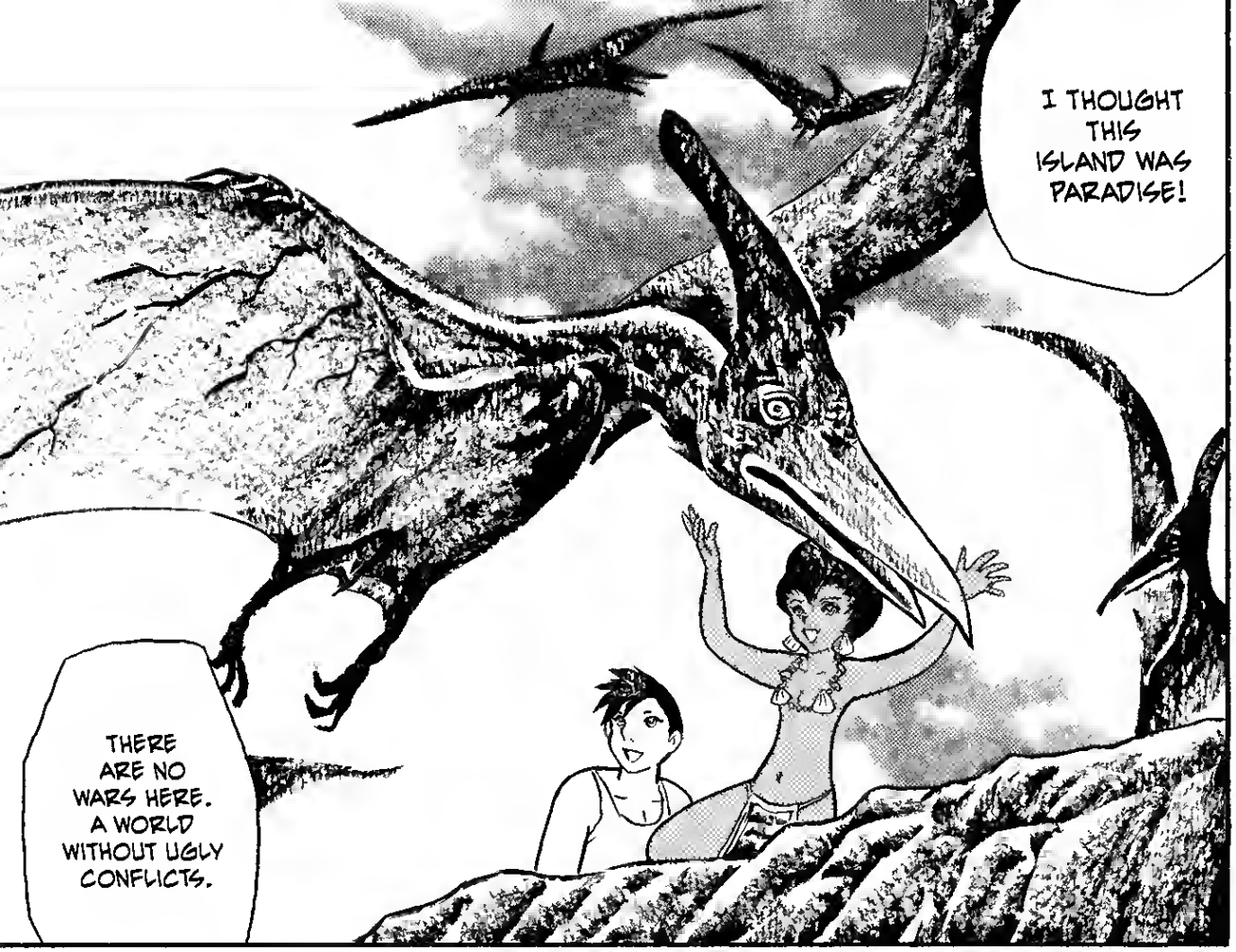
WAS THAT THERE WERE REAL, LIVING DINOSAURS ON THE ISLAND.


BUT WHAT ASTONISHED ME THE MOST-
THE VILLAGERS WERE VERY KIND PEOPLE, AND WE BECAME FAST FRIENDS.

STEGOSAURS AND TYRANNOSAURS, TOO.
TRICERATOPS AND BRONTOSAURS!

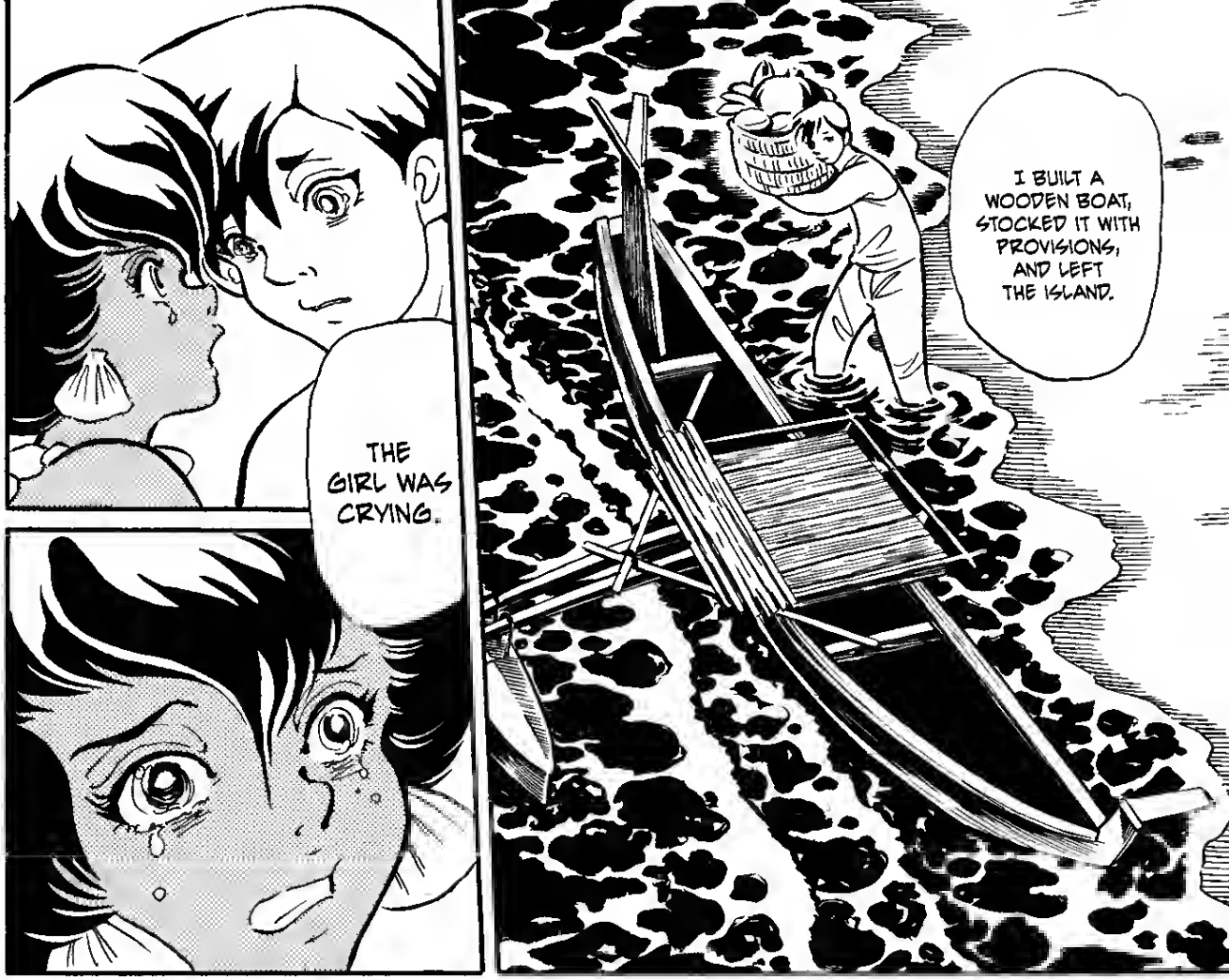

THE DINOSAURS WERE FRIENDS WITH THE ISLANDERS, AND THEY NEVER FOUGHT.

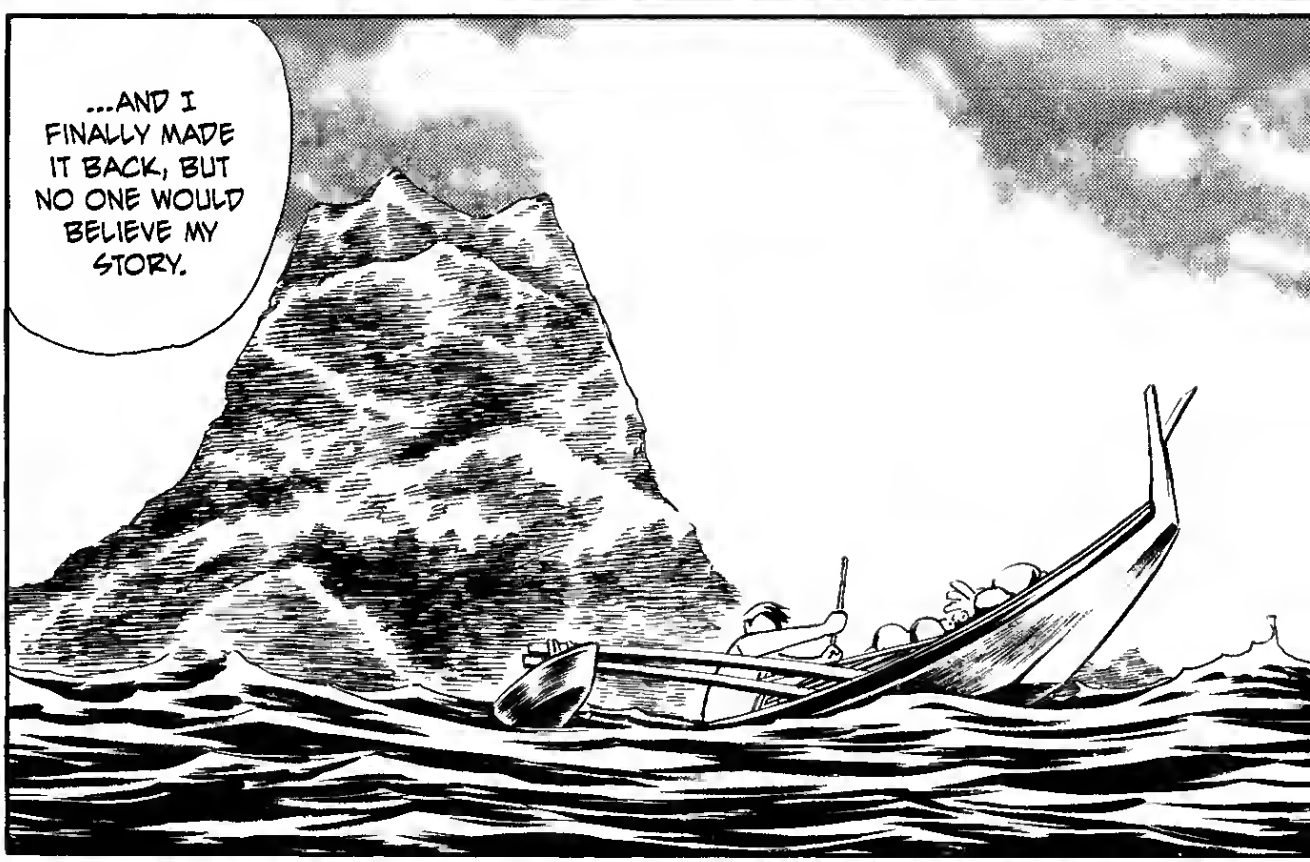
THEY EVEN HELPED WITH FISHING.


I THOUGHT THIS ISLAND WAS PARADISE!
THERE ARE NO WARS HERE. A WORLD WITHOUT UGLY CONFLICTS.

"I CAN'T LIVE PEACEFULLY BY MYSELF."
BUT OH, HOW SILLY I WAS.

"MY COUNTRY IS AT WAR.
I MUST RETURN TO JAPAN."


THE GIRL WAS CRYING.
I BUILT A WOODEN BOAT, STOCKED IT WITH PROVISIONS, AND LEFT THE ISLAND.

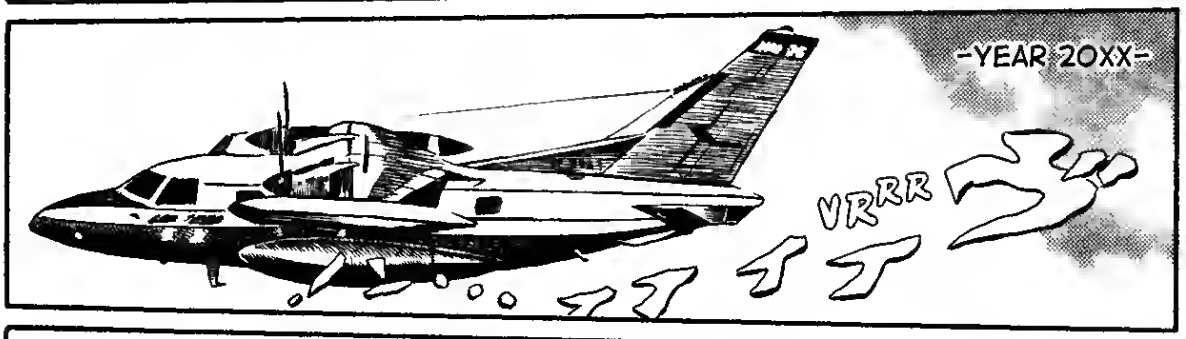

...AND I FINALLY MADE IT BACK, BUT NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE MY STORY.

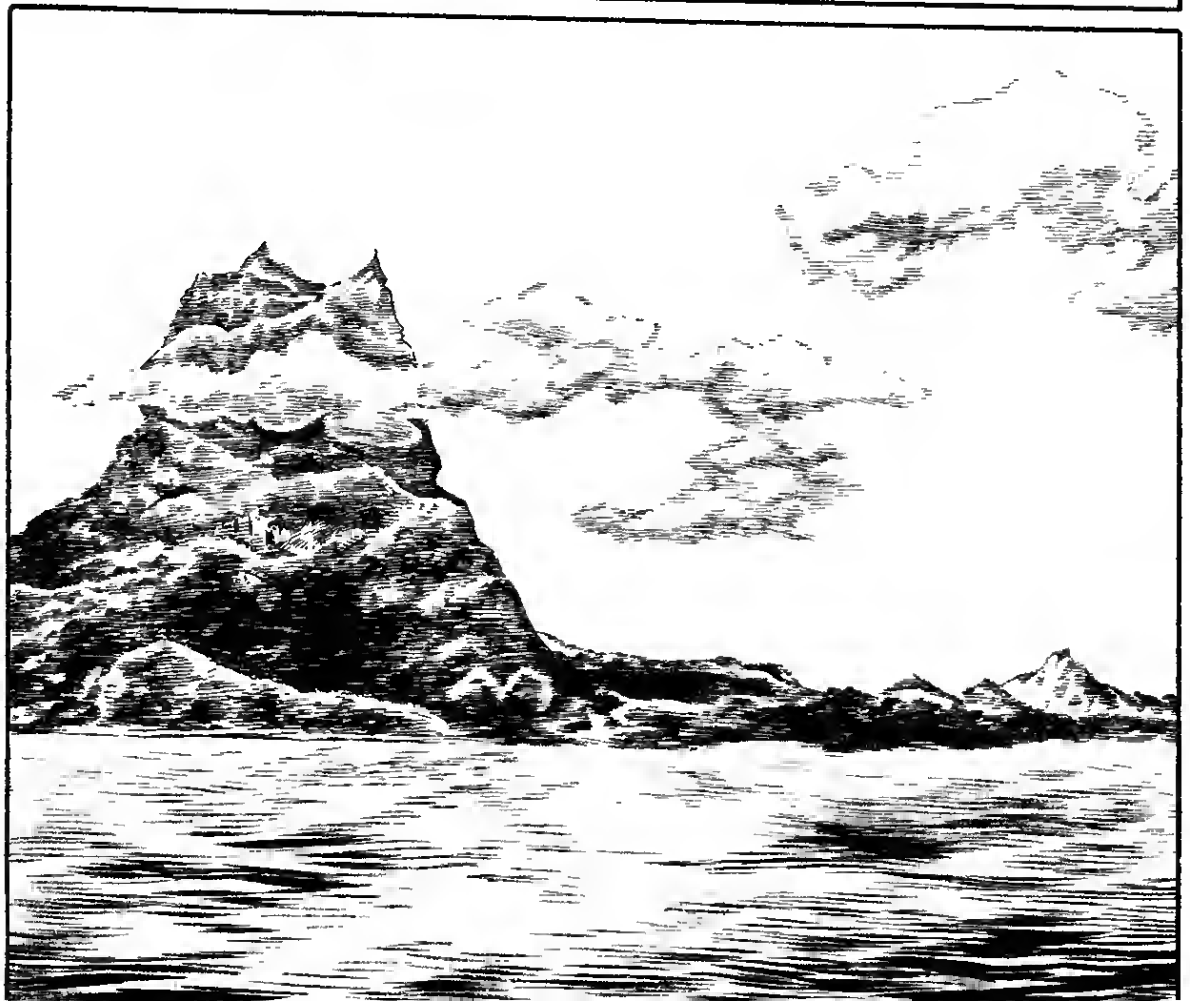
I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT THAT ISLAND.
YES, I SHOULD HAVE STAYED THERE FOREVER.
I WANT TO GO BACK TO THAT ISLAND...
THE YOUNG MASTER FELL ASLEEP, SO I PEERED INTO HIS HEART-
AND QUICKLY WITHDREW.

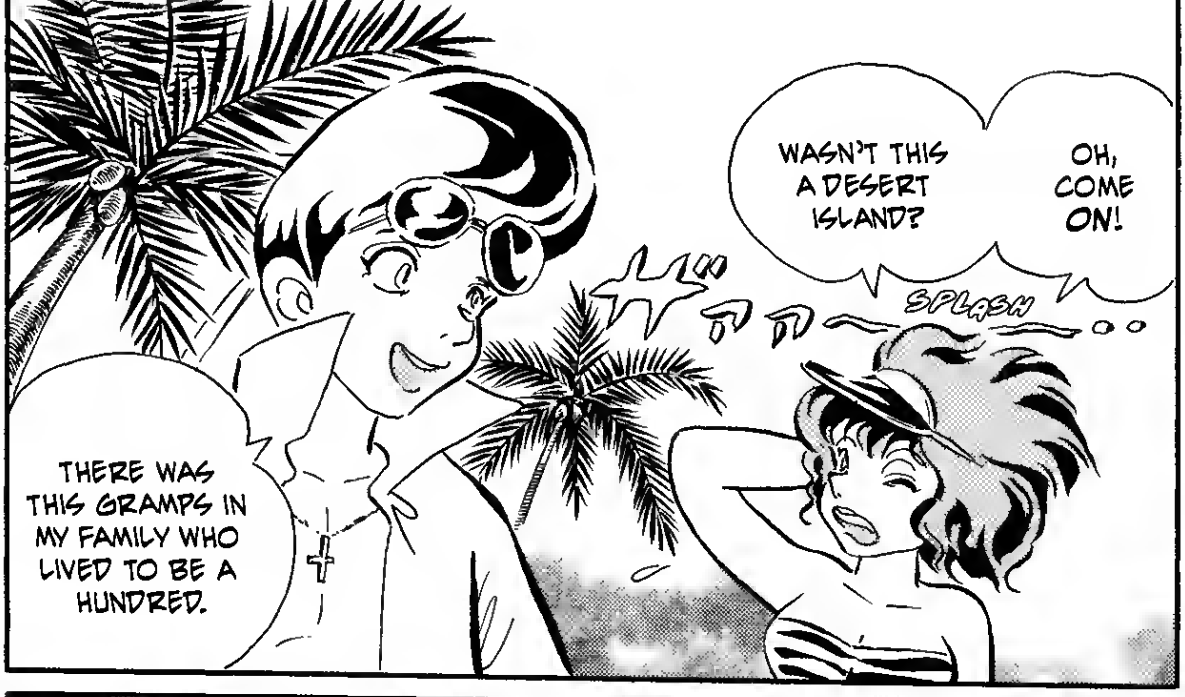
THE SHIP SANK AND SEVERAL OF THEM REACHED A DESERT ISLAND.
THE REAL MEMORY WAS HORRIFYING.
THERE WAS NO FOOD.
IN THE END, THEY ATE THEIR DEAD COMRADES...

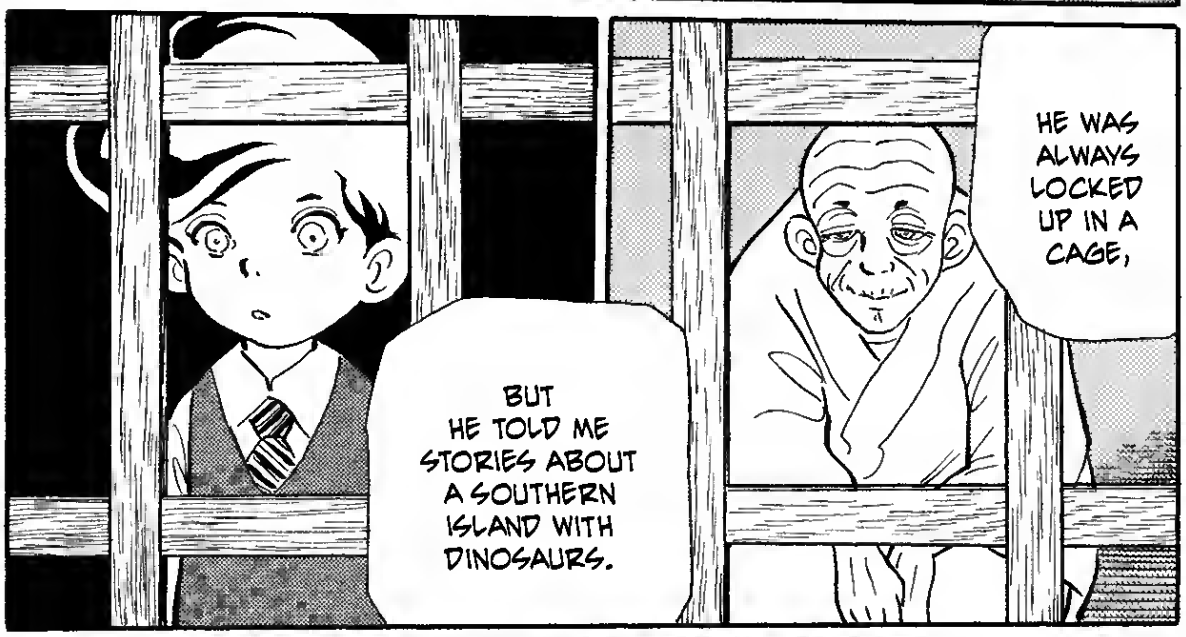
NO NEED TO MAKE HIM REMEMBER.
HE'S HAPPIER LIVING IN HIS OWN FAIRY TALE.
THAT'S WHAT I DECIDED, SO-
FORGIVE ME,
BUT THIS ONE'S TOO MUCH FOR ME. VERY SORRY.
HMPH!
I KNEW SHE'D BE USELESS.

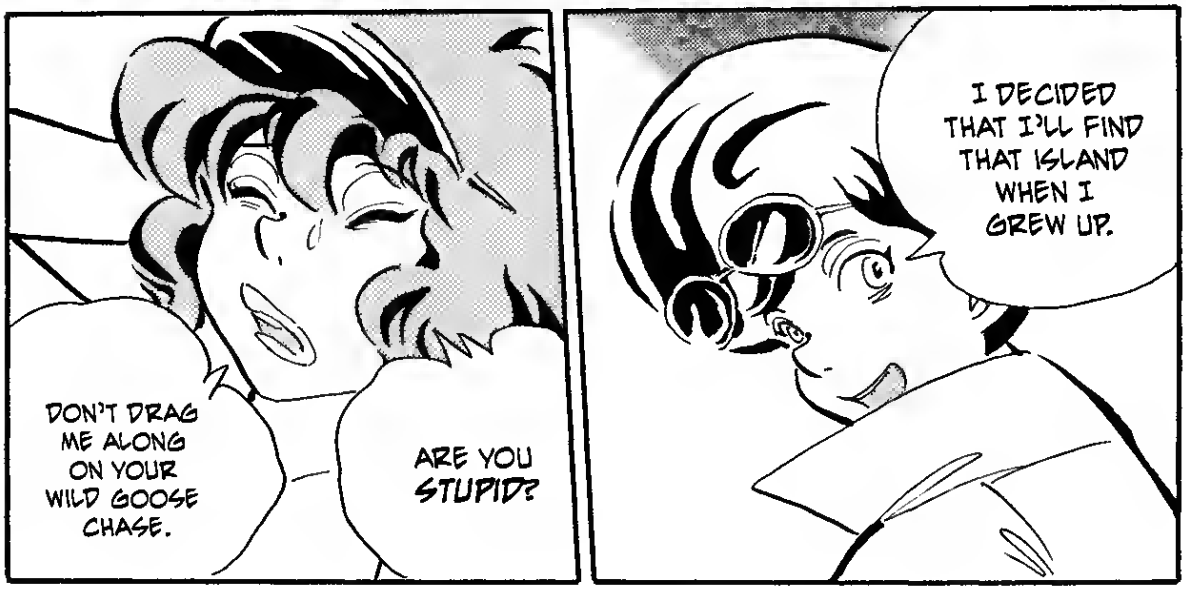
SO I CAME BACK HOME.
WHAT D'YOU THINK, ANEGO? WAS I WRONG?
WHAT'S THAT? "EAT YOUR FOOD?"
SURE, I WILL.


-YEAR 20XX-
VRRR




THERE WAS THIS GRAMPS IN MY FAMILY WHO LIVED TO BE A HUNDRED.
WASN'T THIS A DESERT ISLAND?
OH, COME ON!
SPLASH


BUT HE TOLD ME STORIES ABOUT A SOUTHERN ISLAND WITH DINOSAURS.
HE WAS ALWAYS LOCKED UP IN A CAGE,


DON'T DRAG ME ALONG ON YOUR WILD GOOSE CHASE.
ARE YOU STUPID?
I DECIDED THAT I'LL FIND THAT ISLAND WHEN I GREW UP.

©END©

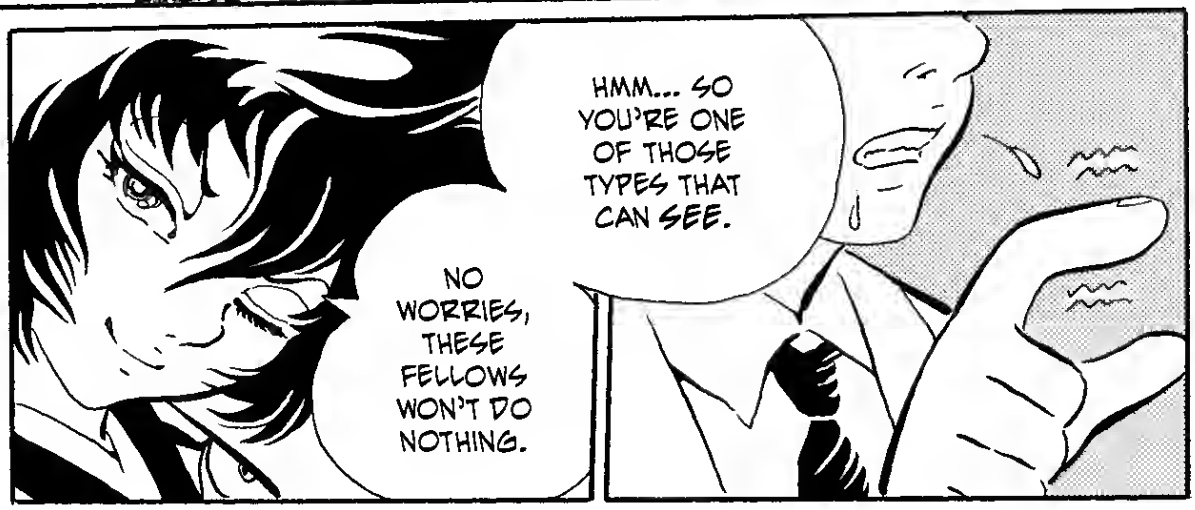
Chapter 26: Family

HEY, SORRY FOR THE WAIT.
I BROUGHT US A CANDLE.

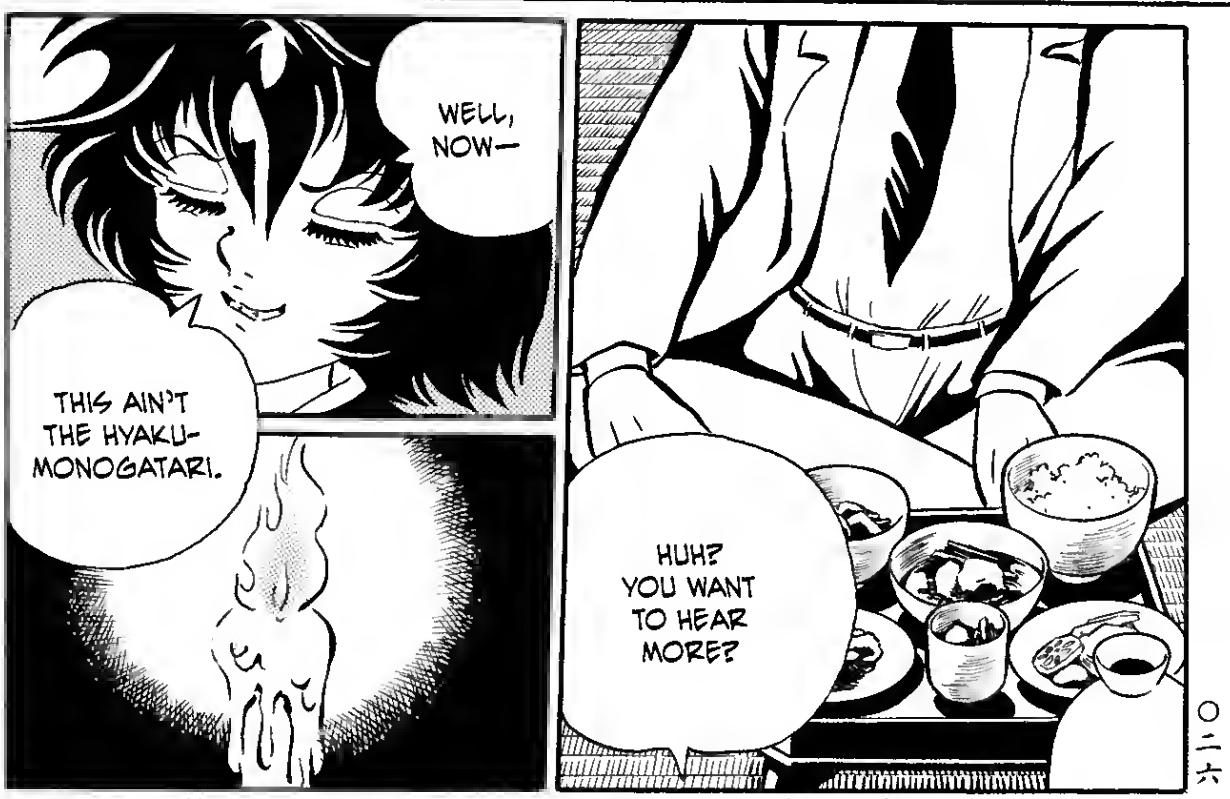
REMINDS YOU OF THE WARTIME BLACKOUTS, YOU SAY?
YOU'RE FINE WITH OUTAGES SO LONG AS THERE'S NO AIR RAID?

HAVE A DRINK?
HEHEHE, YOU'RE A GOOD SPORT.

THERE ARE MONSTERS
BEHIND MY BACK?
WHAT'S THAT?

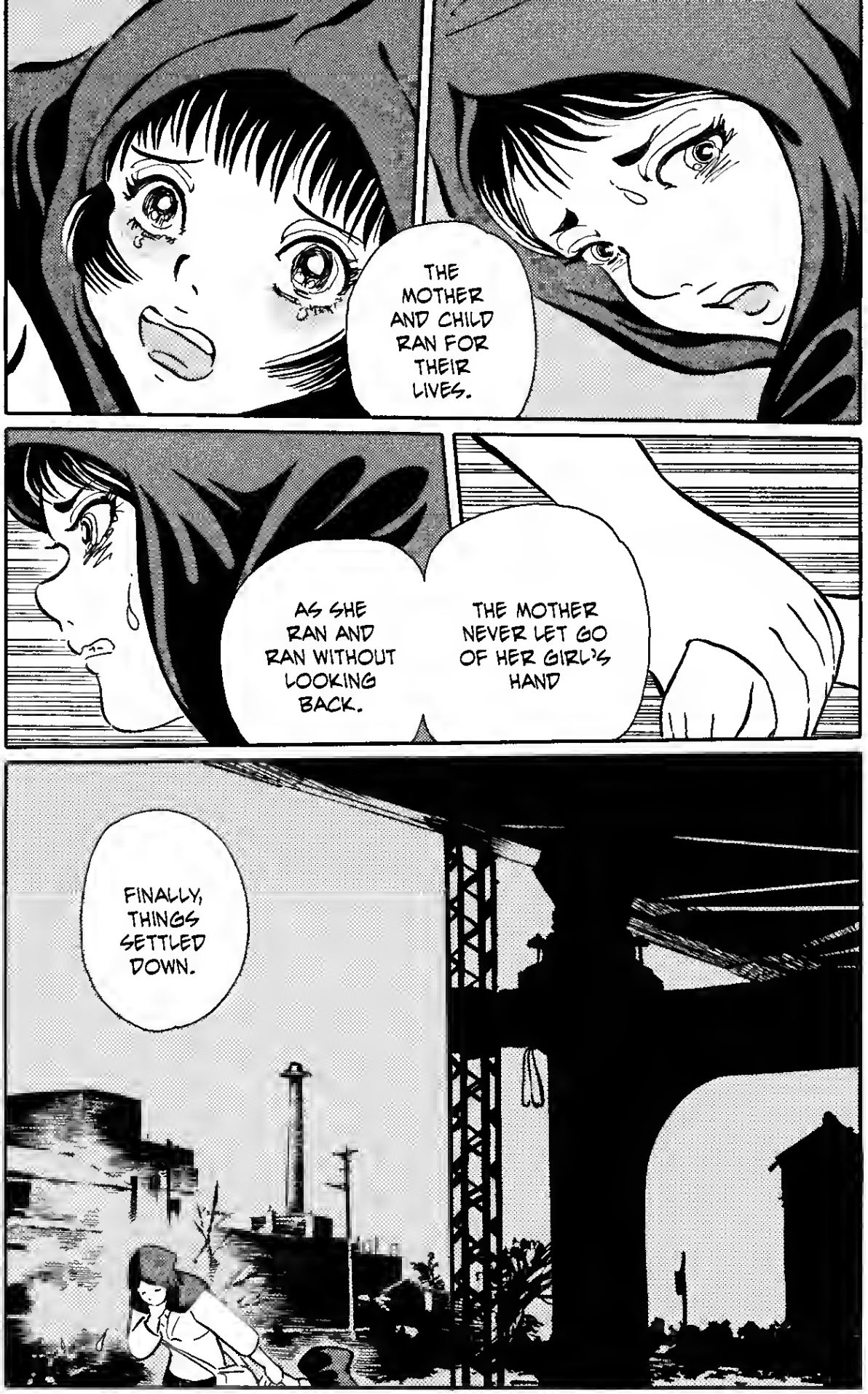

HMM... SO YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE TYPES THAT CAN SEE.
NO WORRIES, THESE FELLOWS WON'T DO NOTHING.

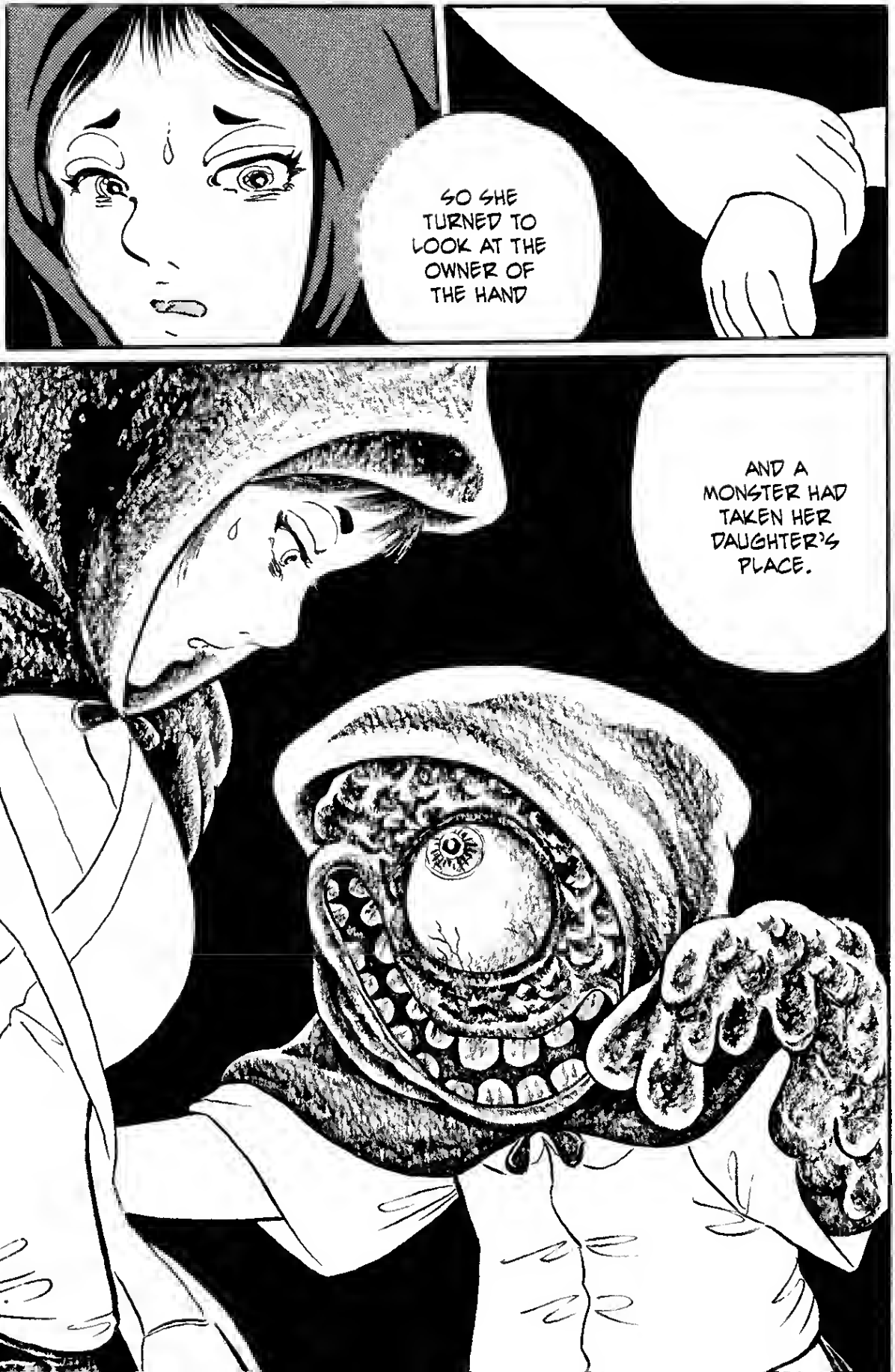
I'LL SEND 'EM AWAY IF THEY BOTHER YOU.
WHISH
YOU LOT CAN SHOVE OFF!
SHOO, SHOO!
THEY LEVELED THE CITIES, SURE,
BUT THEY ALSO RIPPED A HOLE INTO THE OTHERWORLD.
WE DID HAVE THOSE MASSIVE AIR RAIDS, AFTER ALL.
BOMBS DROPPED LIKE NO TOMORROW—



T/N: Hyakumonogatari is an Edo parlor game, a group of people lit 100 (hyaku) andon lamps indoors at night and took turns telling ghost stories, extinguishing a lamp after each story. The game often ended at the 99th tale, for apparitions were said to appear after the 100th.

HERE'S A TALE I HEARD.
A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTER WERE FLEEING DURING AN AIR RAID.
THE BOMBS KEPT FALLING.
THE CITY BURNED, THE PEOPLE BURNED.


THE MOTHER AND CHILD RAN FOR THEIR LIVES.
AS SHE RAN AND RAN WITHOUT LOOKING BACK.
THE MOTHER NEVER LET GO OF HER GIRL'S HAND
FINALLY, THINGS SETTLED DOWN.

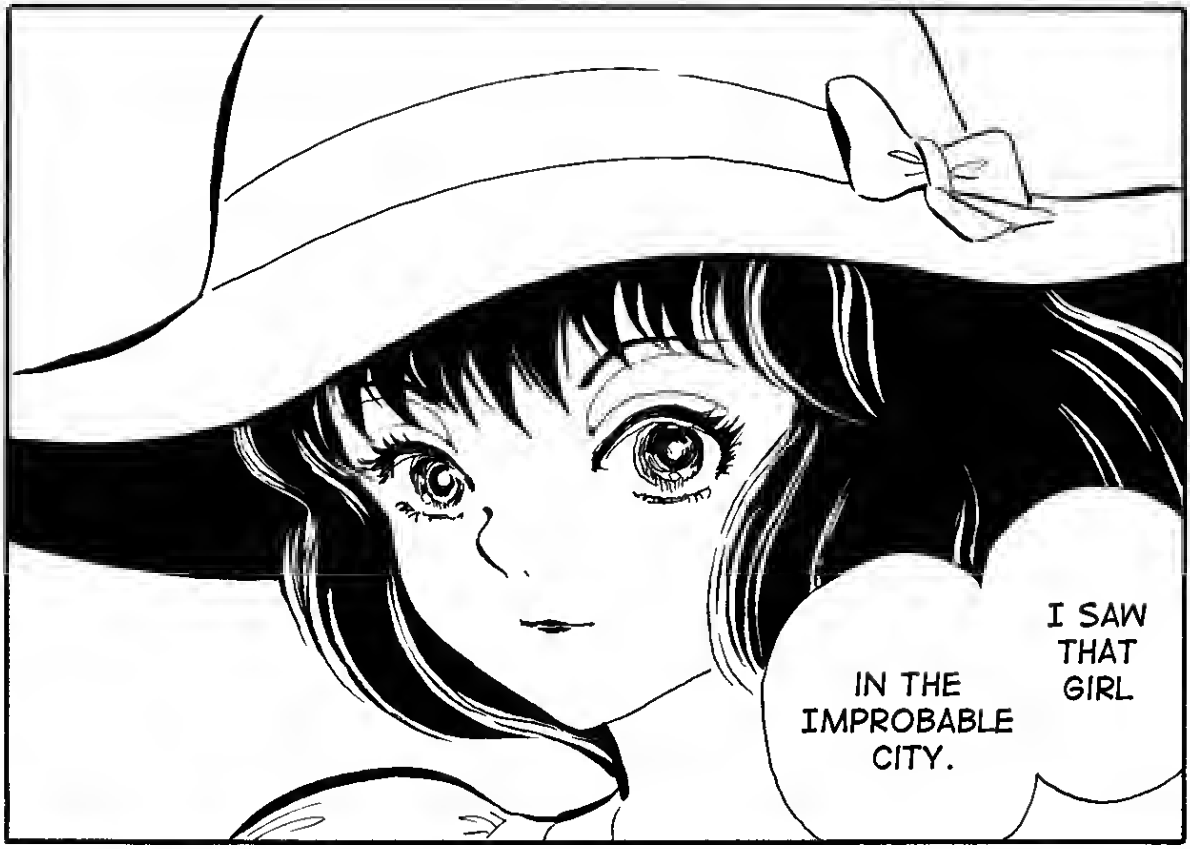

SO SHE TURNED TO LOOK AT THE OWNER OF THE HAND
AND A MONSTER HAD TAKEN HER DAUGHTER'S PLACE.

AH, YOU DIDN'T LIKE THAT STORY?
BUT YOU ASKED FOR IT, MASTER.
HAVE ANOTHER AND RAISE YOUR SPIRITS!
OH, LEAVING ALREADY?
YOU'RE LUCKY TO HAVE A HOME AND FAMILY TO RETURN TO.
NOW YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR FAMILY, MASTER.

WE MANAGED TO SURVIVE THAT WAR.
OF COURSE I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM...
LUCKY TO HAVE A FAMILY WAITING, EH...?
THAT'S TRUE.
BY THE WAY, MASTER—
MAYBE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED,
BUT LOOK AFTER 'EM ANYWAY!
FAMILY IS FAMILY.
BUT YOUR FAMILY MIGHT'VE BEEN REPLACED BY SOMETHING ELSE.
I'M HOME.
RATTLE
ガラッ
ガラッ

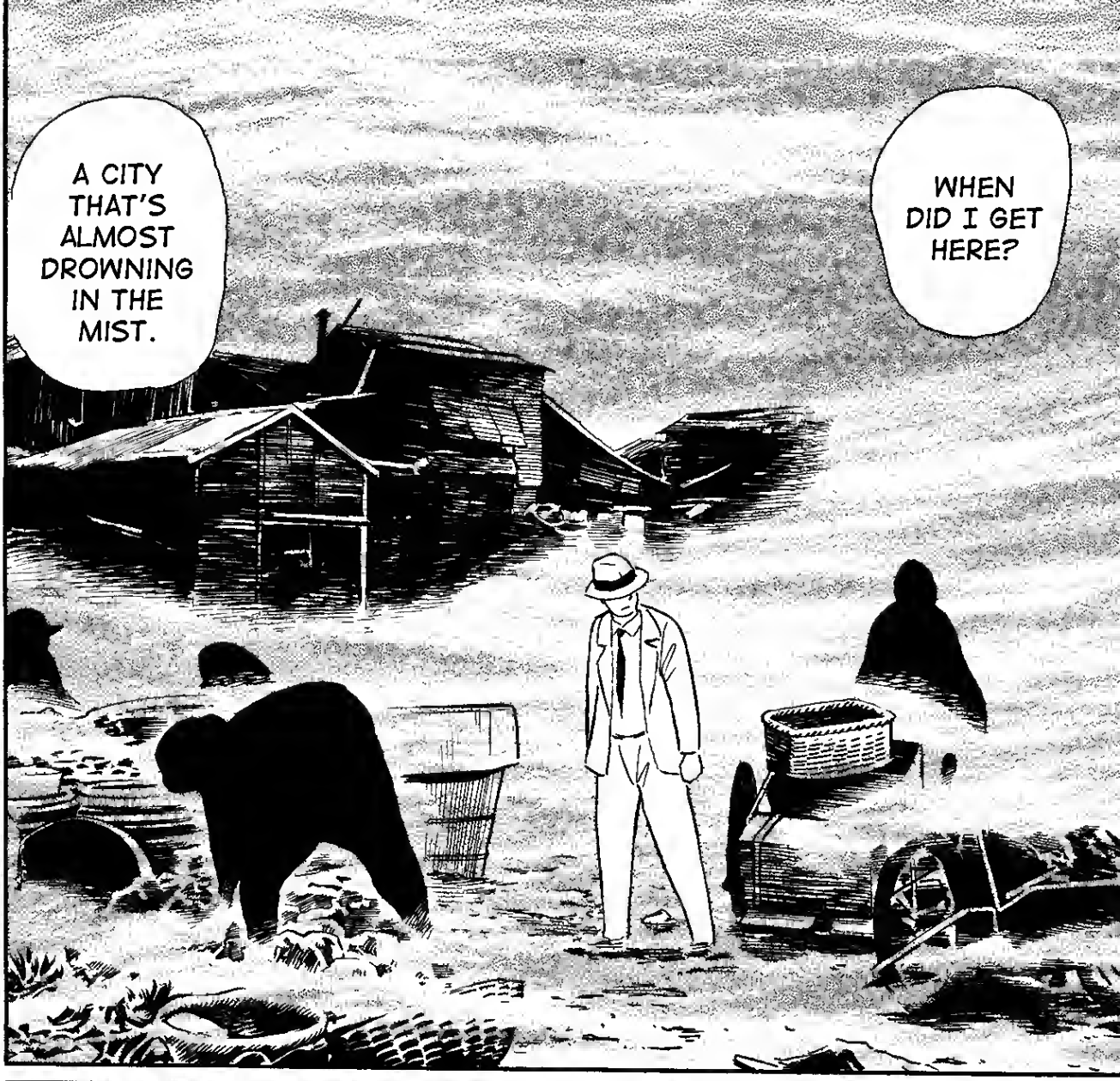
WELCOME BACK, DAD!
WELCOME BACK, DEAR.

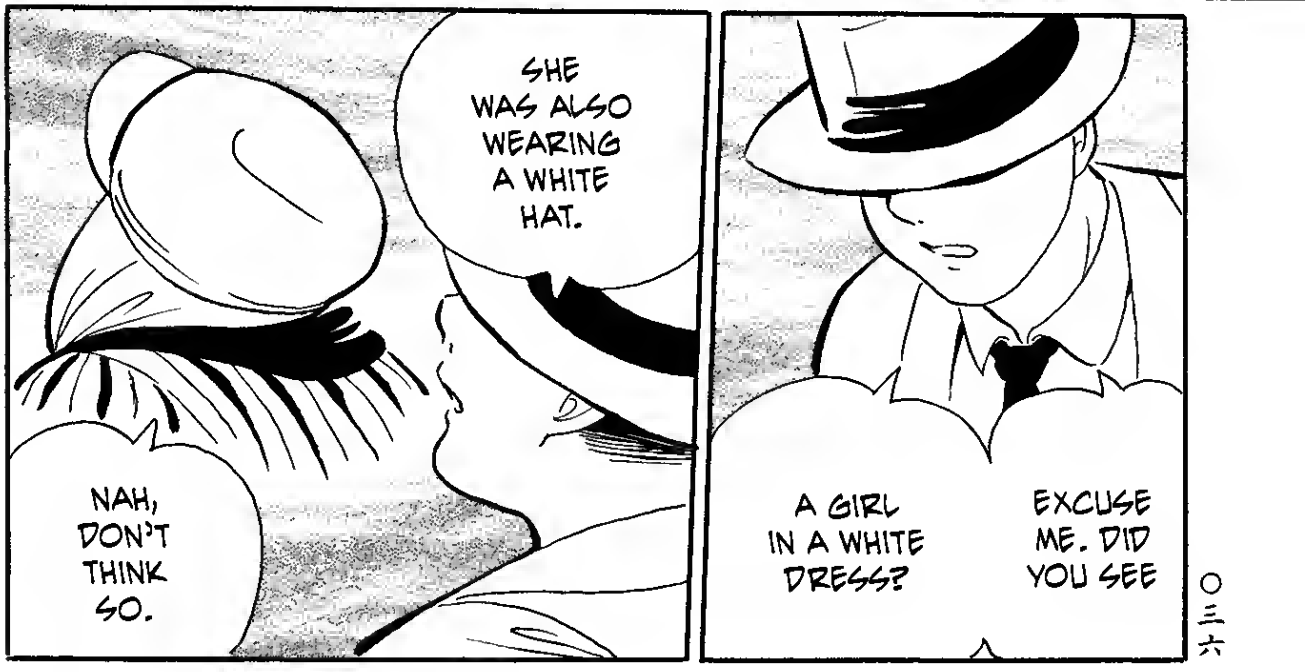
Chapter 27: The Improbable City and the Phantom Girl

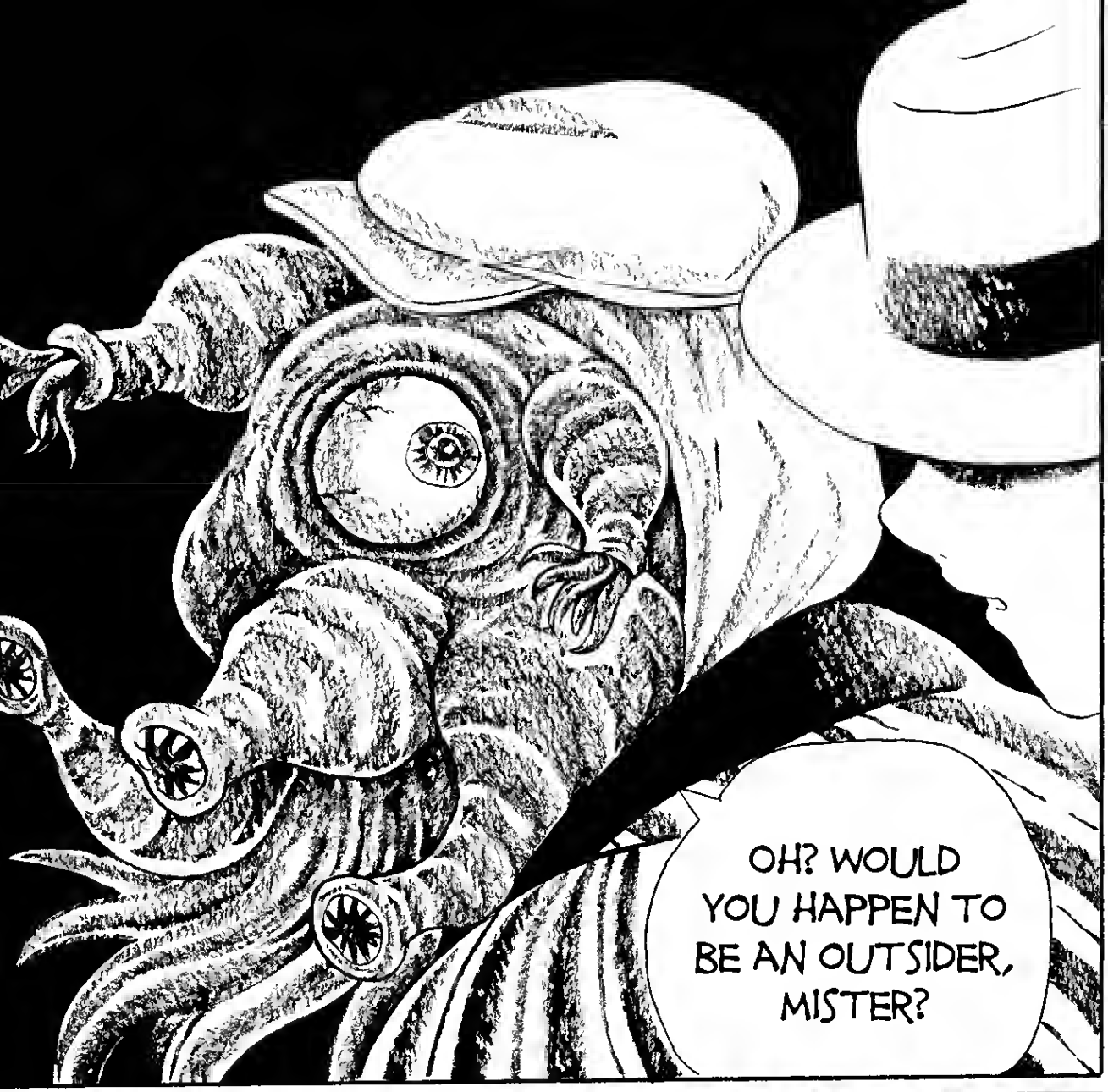

I SAW THAT GIRL
IN THE IMPROBABLE CITY.

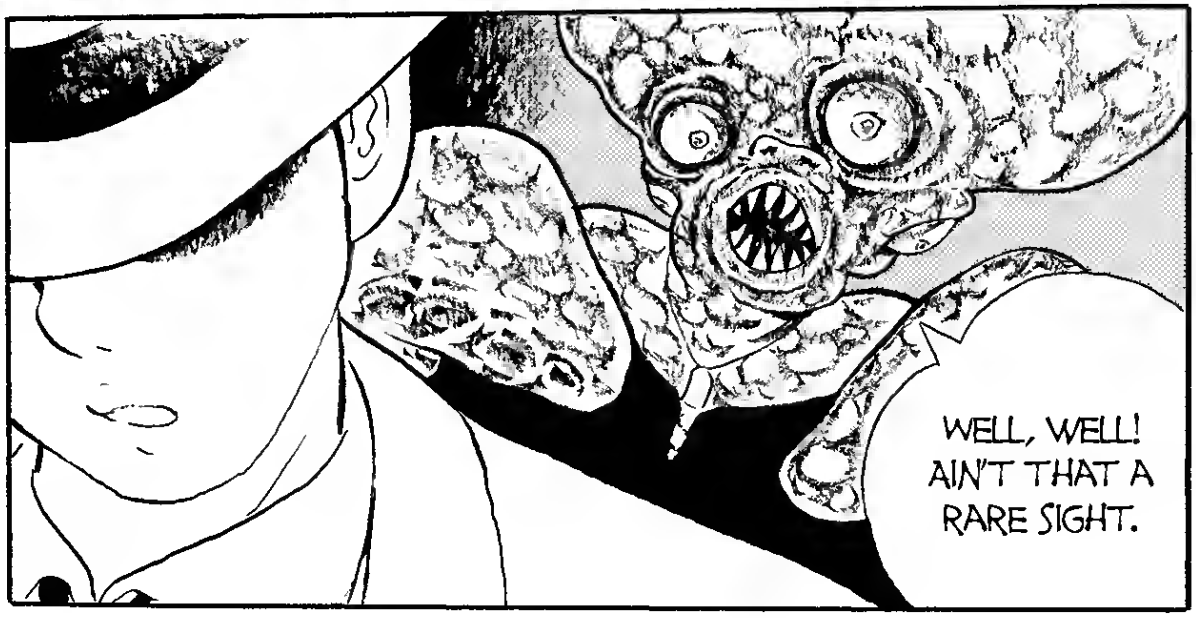
HEY!

WAIT!
HEY,
WAIT, MISS!


WHEN DID I GET HERE?
A CITY THAT'S ALMOST DROWNING IN THE MIST.


EXCUSE ME. DID YOU SEE A GIRL IN A WHITE DRESS?
SHE WAS ALSO WEARING A WHITE HAT.
NAH, DON'T THINK SO.


OH? WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO BE AN OUTSIDER, MISTER?


WELL, WELL! AIN'T THAT A RARE SIGHT.

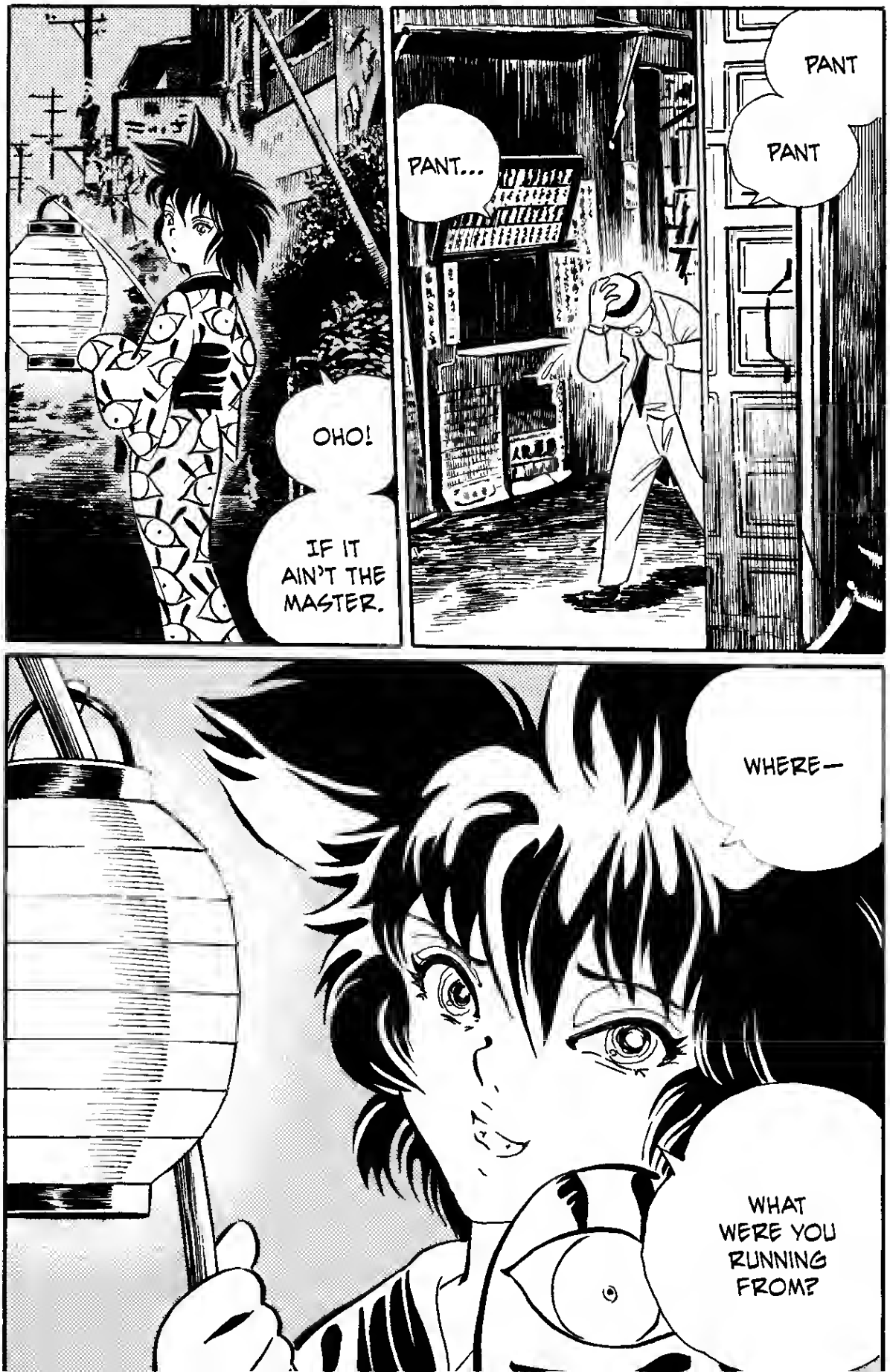
AN OUTSIDER, YOU SAY?
AN OUTSIDER!

NOW JUST A MINUTE.
THIS ISN'T A PLACE YOU CAN ENTER EASILY.

ISN'T HE ONE OF US?
THAT'S RIGHT.
HE'S RIGHT.
ARE YOU ONE OF US?
HEY, ARE YOU ONE OF US?

STOP IT! DON'T TOUCH ME!!
YOU CAN LIVE HERE.
ONE OF US, ONE OF US!
YOU CAN LIVE WITH US.

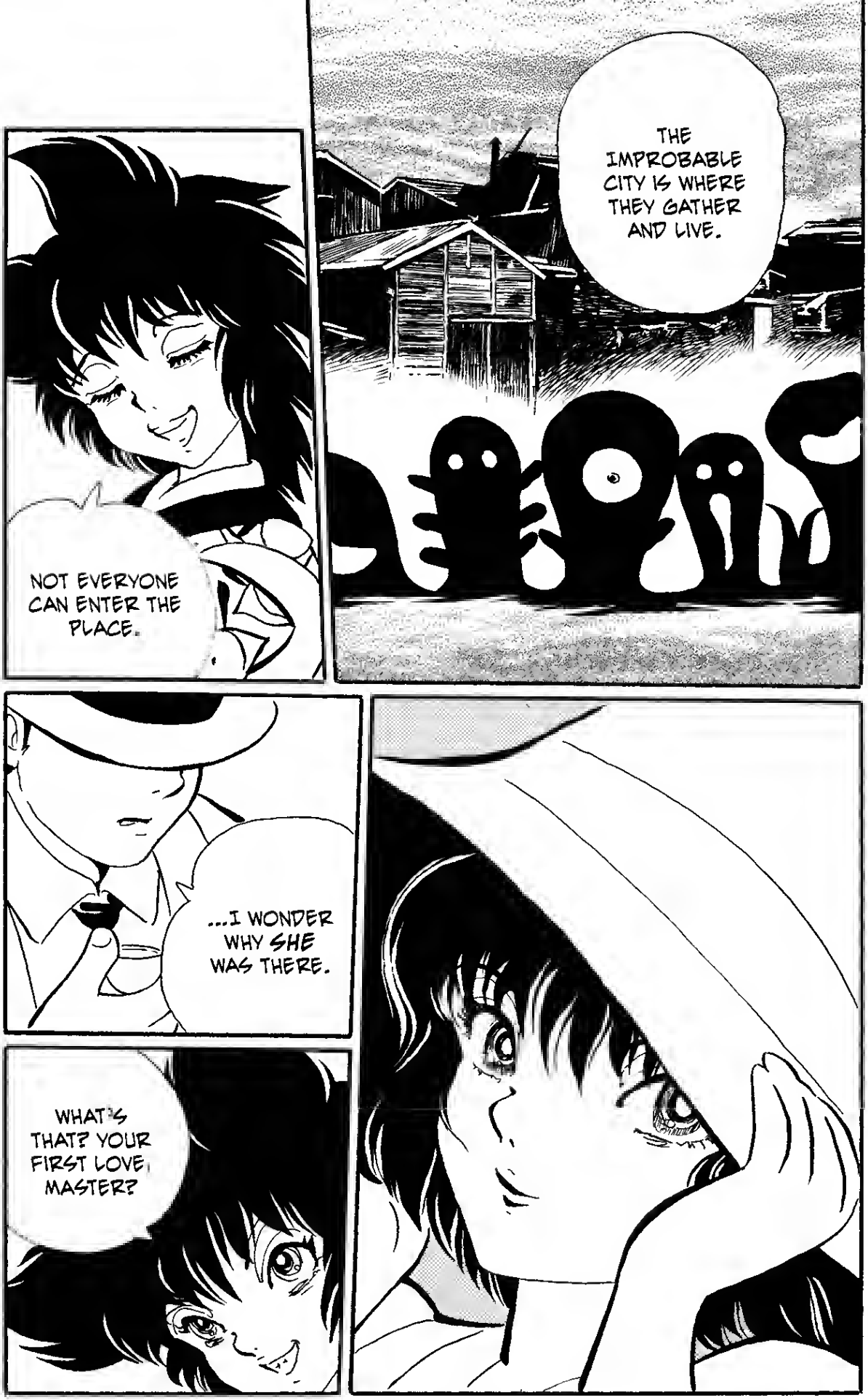
DON'T RUN AWAY!
HEEEY!
COME BACK...!
HEEEY!

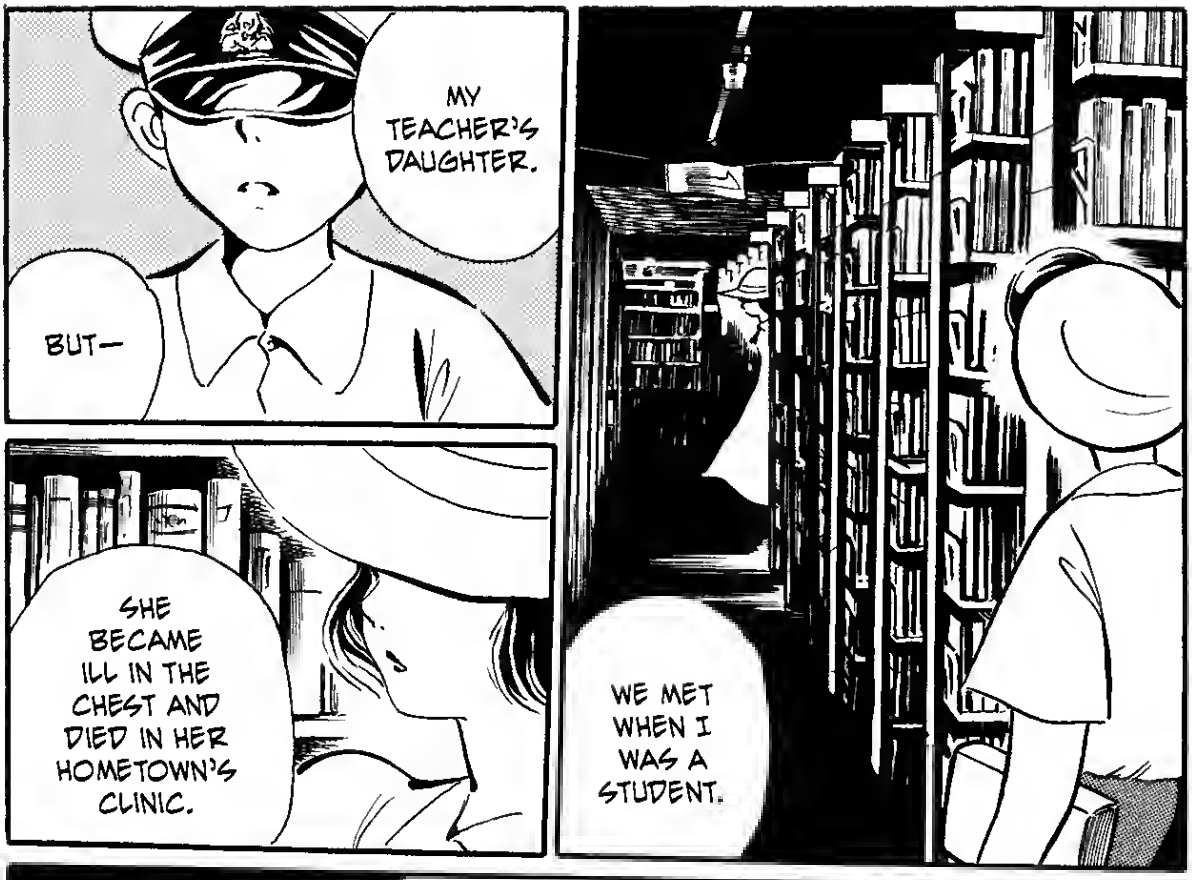

PANT
PANT
PANT...
OHO!
IF IT AIN'T THE MASTER.
WHERE—
WHAT WERE YOU RUNNING FROM?

YOU STUMBLED INTO ANOTHER QUEER PLACE.
AH, THAT'S THE IMPROB-ABLE CITY.
AND MANAGED TO GIVE 'EM THE SLIP, EH?
YOU'RE AN ARTFUL FELLOW.
TELL ME—
WHAT IS THE "IMPROBABLE CITY"?

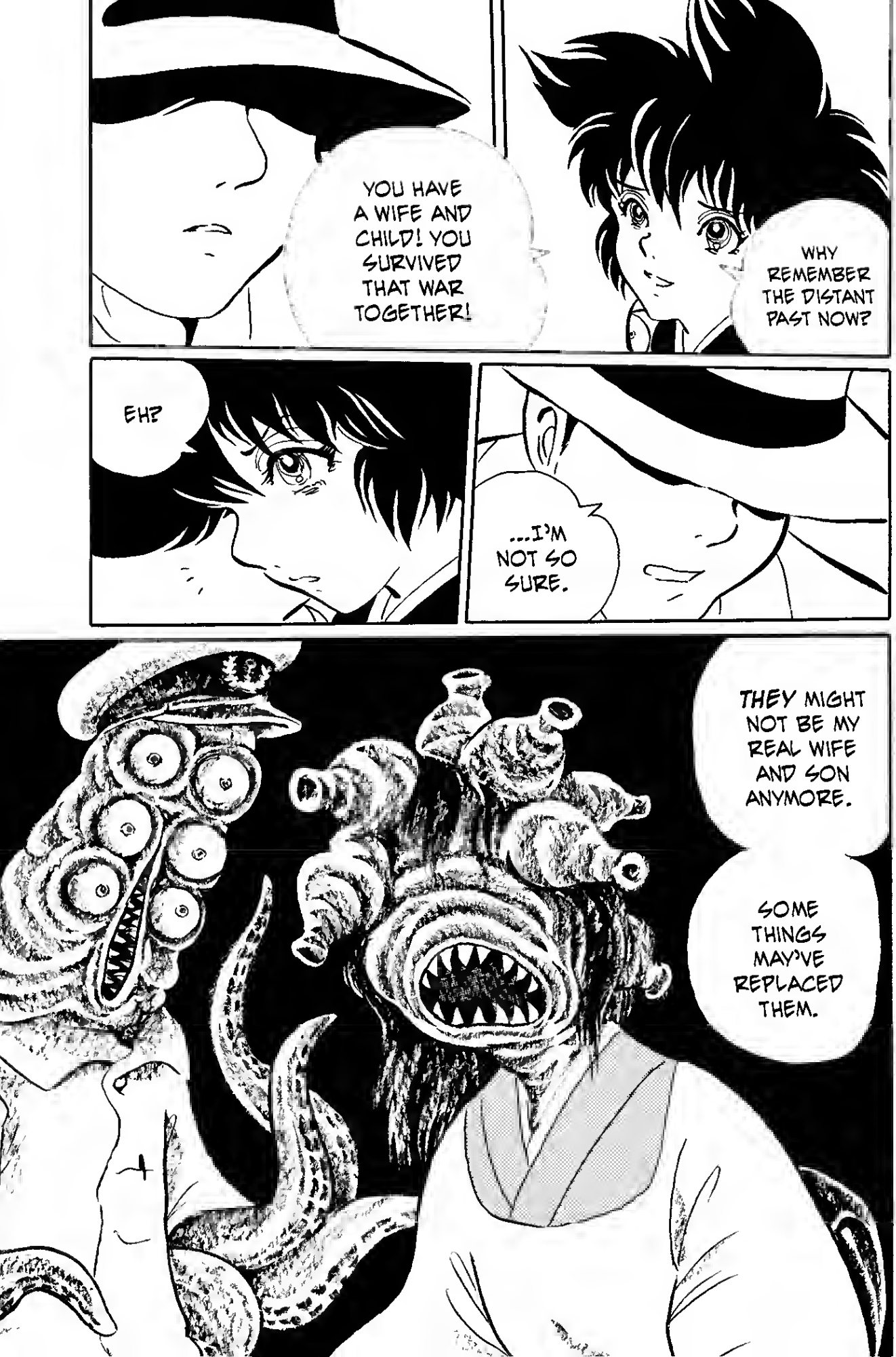
THOSE AIR RAIDS FROM THE WAR
I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE.

WORE DOWN THE BORDERS BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE OTHER-WORLD.
AND *THEY* SNUCK IN FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

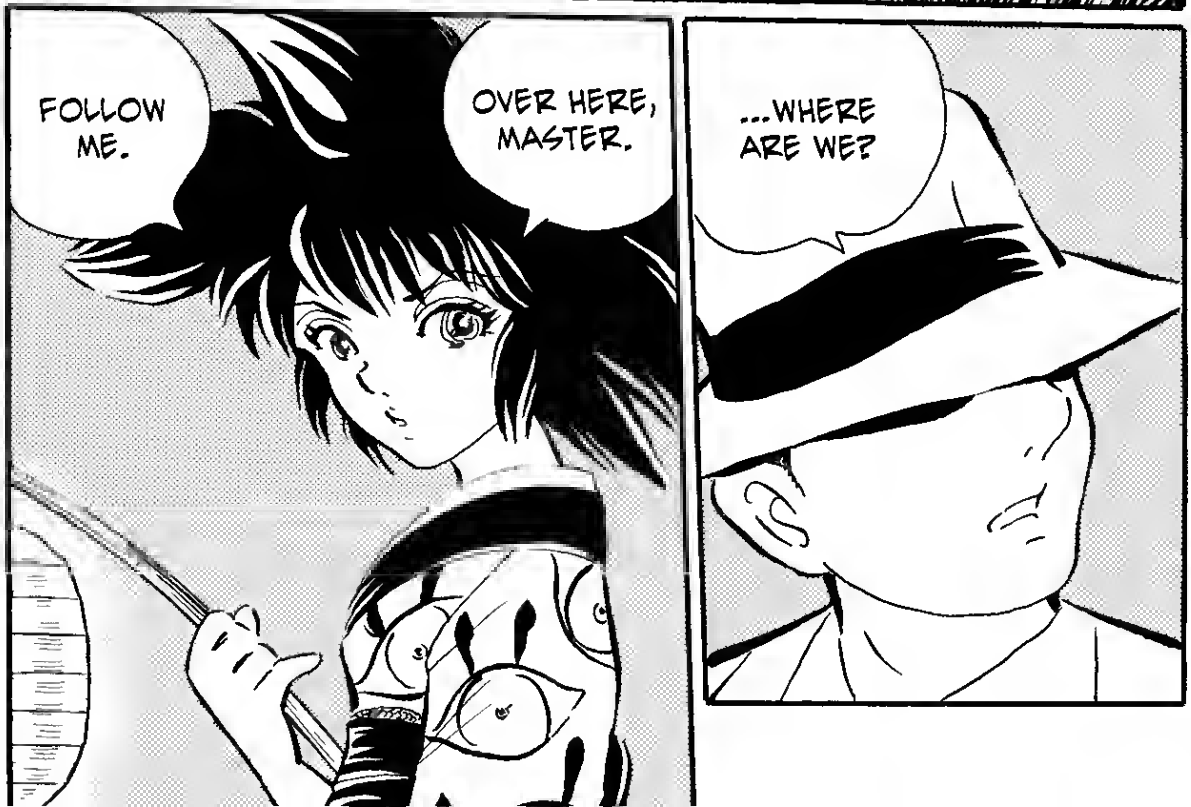

THE IMPROBABLE CITY IS WHERE THEY GATHER AND LIVE.
NOT EVERYONE CAN ENTER THE PLACE.
...I WONDER WHY SHE WAS THERE.
WHAT'S THAT? YOUR FIRST LOVE, MASTER?


MY TEACHER'S DAUGHTER.
BUT—
SHE BECAME ILL IN THE CHEST AND DIED IN HER HOMETOWN'S CLINIC.
WE MET WHEN I WAS A STUDENT.

WHY WAS THAT GIRL IN THE CITY?
DID SHE BECOME ONE OF THEM?
NAH.
THE GIRL WAS A FIGMENT OF YOUR IMAGINATION. IT CAN HAPPEN IN THAT CITY.

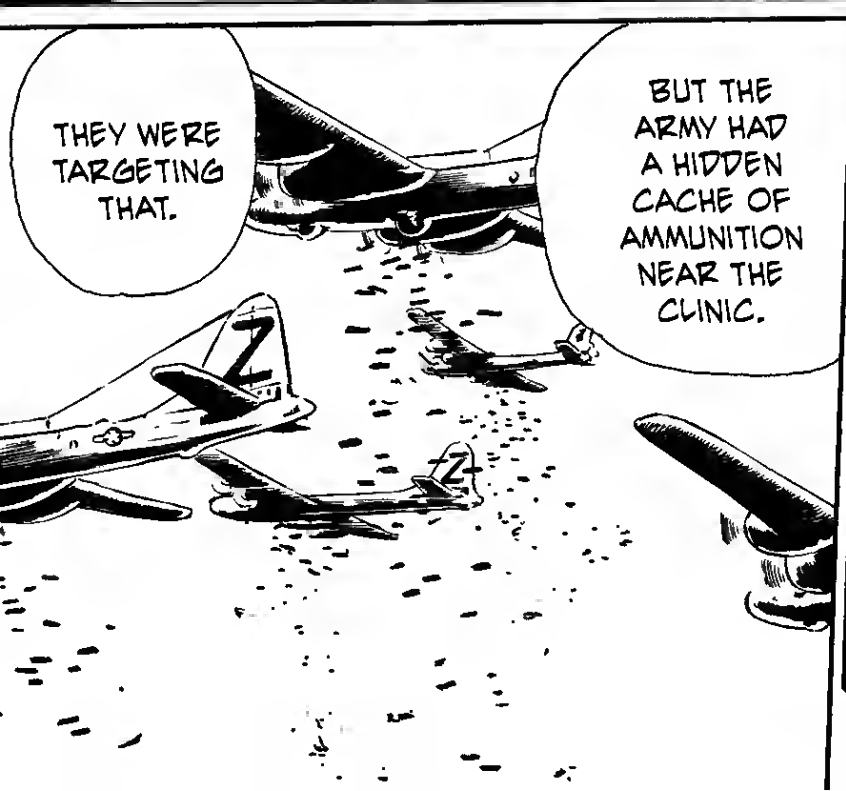

YOU HAVE A WIFE AND CHILD! YOU SURVIVED THAT WAR TOGETHER!
WHY REMEMBER THE DISTANT PAST NOW?
EH?
...I'M NOT SO SURE.
THEY MIGHT NOT BE MY REAL WIFE AND SON ANYMORE.
SOME THINGS MAY'VE REPLACED THEM.

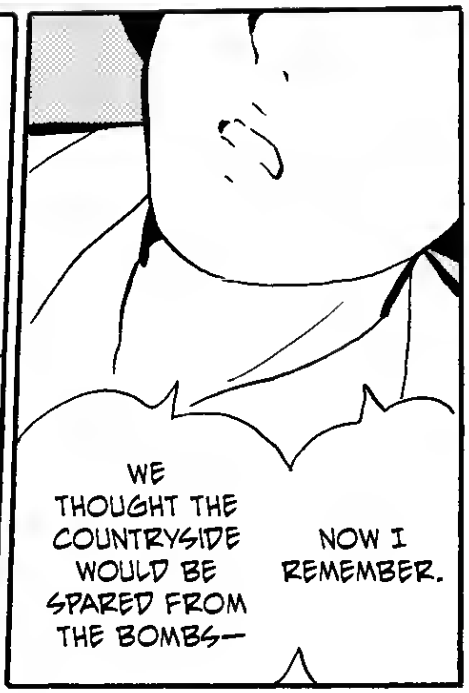
IF I GO BACK TO THAT CITY,
AND SO YOU REMEMBERED YOUR BOYHOOD CRUSH.
MEN SURE ARE FICKLE.
YOU'LL BE STUCK THERE FOREVER.
FORGET IT.
WILL I MEET HER AGAIN?
I WANT TO SEE HER AGAIN.
FINE BY ME.

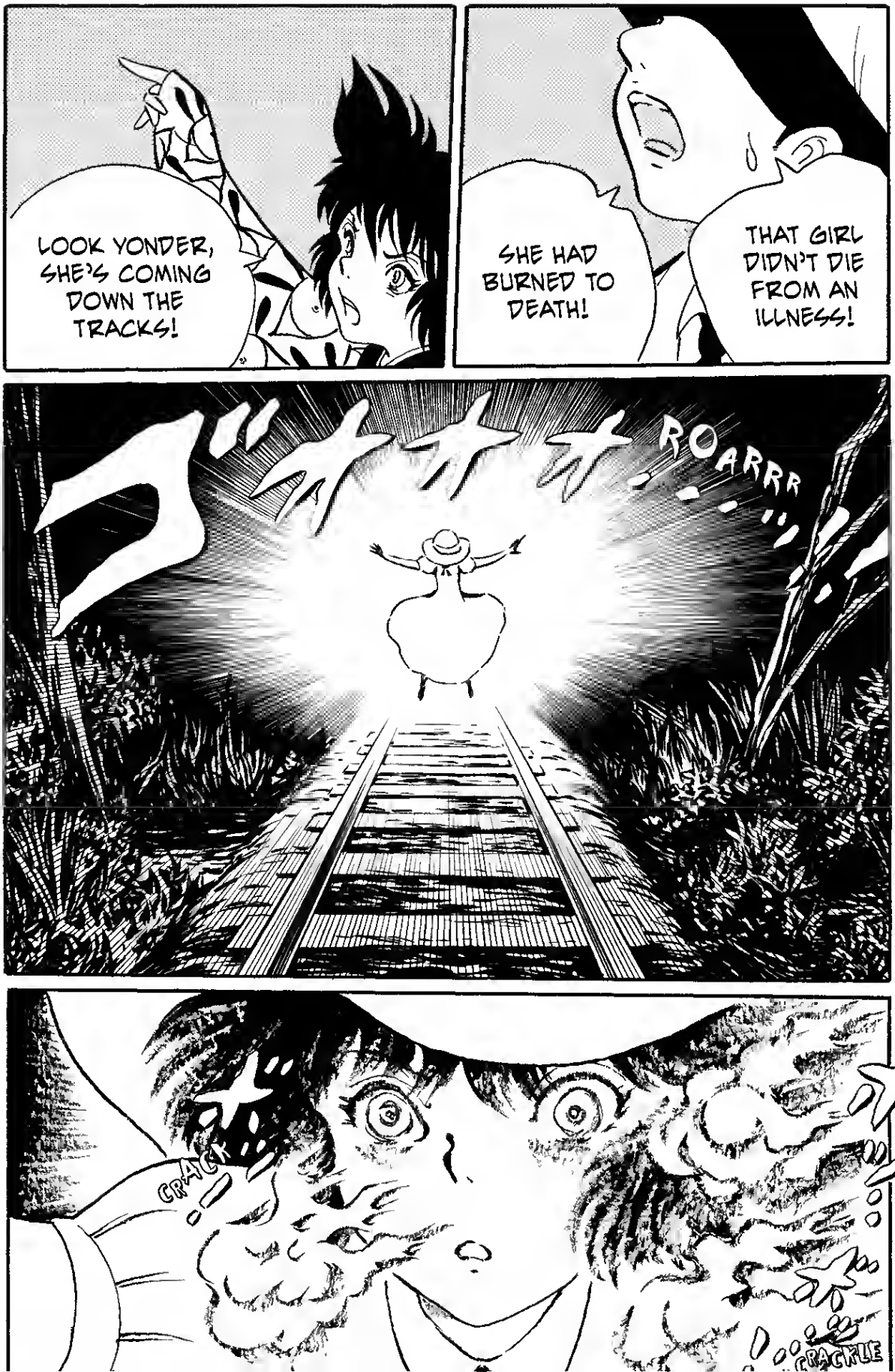

...WHERE ARE WE?
OVER HERE, MASTER.
FOLLOW ME.

TRAIN TRACKS.
WE'RE WALKING ON TRAIN TRACKS.
THAT'S RIGHT.
GO DOWN THESE TRACKS,
AND YOU'LL REACH THE VILLAGE CLINIC.
THAT'S WHERE SHE IS.
AH... THAT'S RIGHT. BUT—

WHY ARE THE MOUNTAINS BURNING?
AIR RAID.
DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FORGOTTEN.

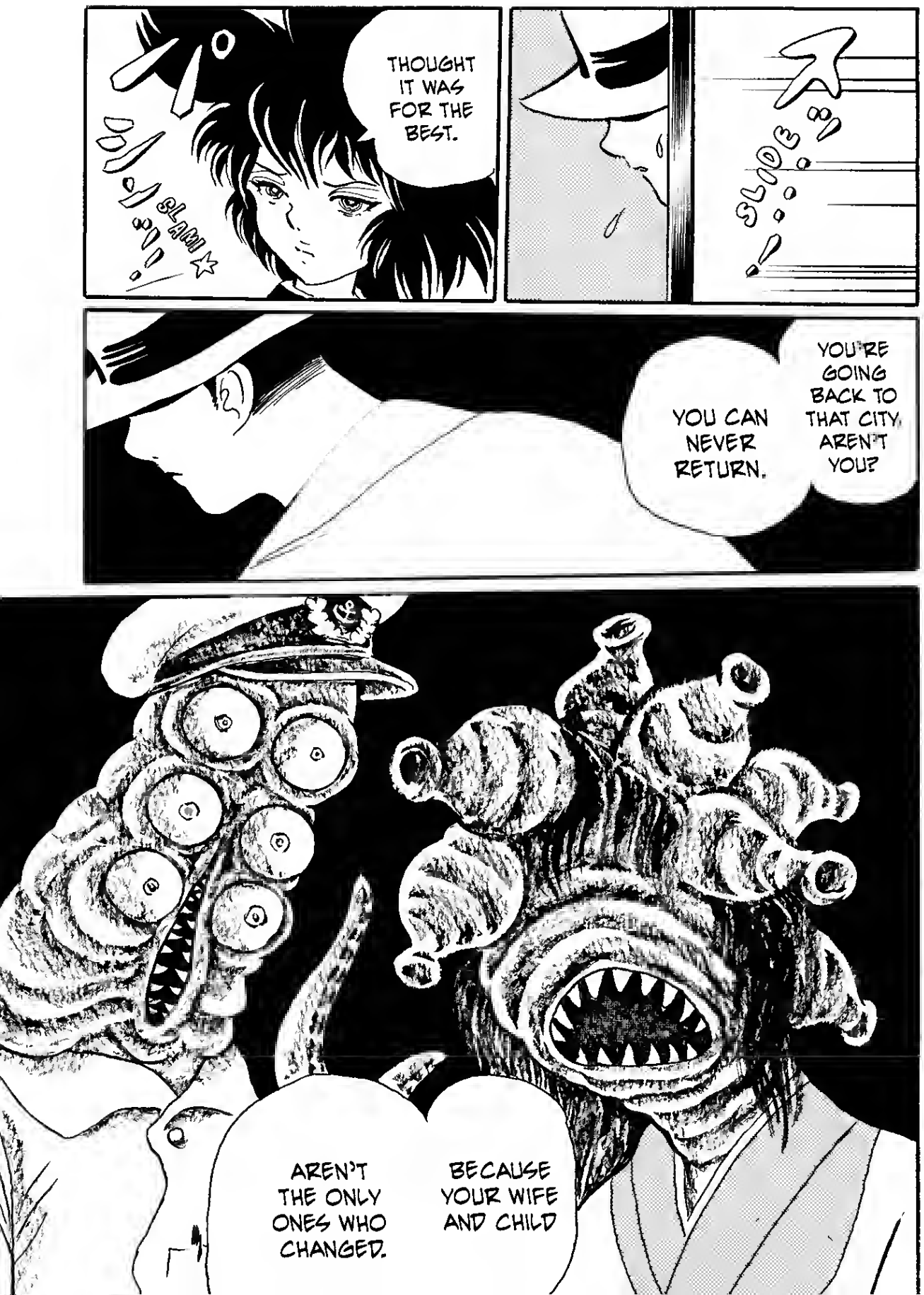

THEY WERE TARGETING THAT.
BUT THE ARMY HAD A HIDDEN CACHE OF AMMUNITION NEAR THE CLINIC.


WE THOUGHT THE COUNTRYSIDE WOULD BE SPARED FROM THE BOMBS—
NOW I REMEMBER.


LOOK YONDER, SHE'S COMING DOWN THE TRACKS!
SHE HAD BURNED TO DEATH!
THAT GIRL DIDN'T DIE FROM AN ILLNESS!
ROARRR
CRACK
CRACK
CRACKLE

S-STOP IT...
STOP!
FWOOM
NOOO!

STOP IT...!
PANT
PANT
PANT
WHY DID YOU SHOW ME THAT NIGHTMARE?
THAT WAS HORRIBLE!
PANT
PANT
I WON'T COME HERE AGAIN.
...I'M SORRY.


THOUGHT IT WAS FOR THE BEST.
SLAM
SLIDE
YOU'RE GOING BACK TO THAT CITY, AREN'T YOU?
YOU CAN NEVER RETURN.
BECAUSE YOUR WIFE AND CHILD
AREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO CHANGED.

YOU JUST HAVEN'T REALIZED YET.
YOU'VE COMPLETELY CHANGED TOO, MASTER.

YOU'RE ONE OF *THEM* NOW.
©ENDO

Chapter 28: The Call of the Improbable City

...SHAO TSU, WAS IT?
I BROUGHT YOU MORE LIQUOR.
SORRY FOR THE WAIT!
I KNOW THOSE FELLOWS BEHIND YOU ARE FROM THAT CITY.
WON'T YOU TAKE ME THERE?
I HEAR YOU KNOW THE WAY TO THE IMPROBABLE CITY.
!

IT'S ONE THRILL-SEEKER AFTER ANOTHER THESE DAYS.
GOOD GRIEF, ANOTHER CURIOUS ONE?

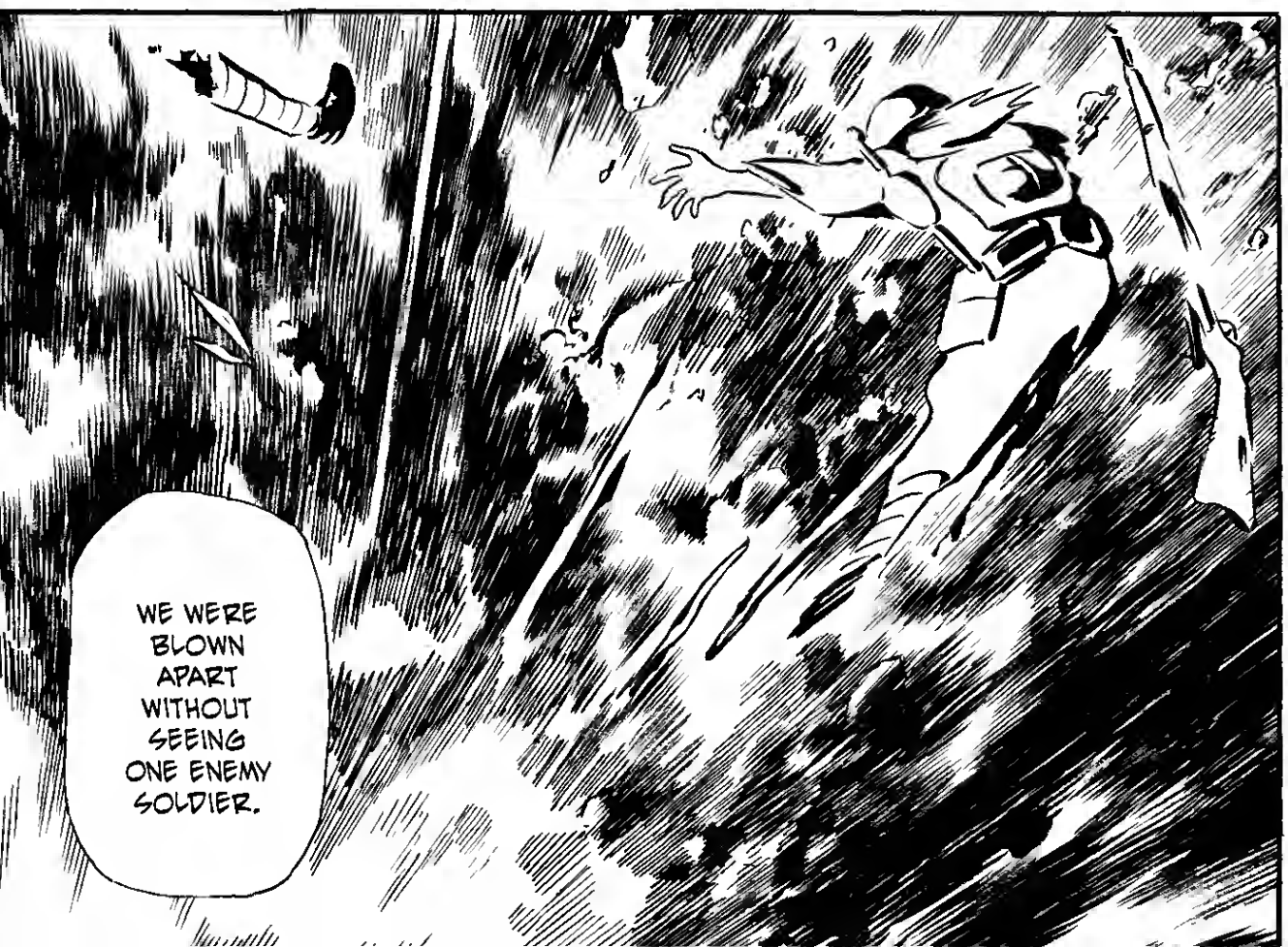
YOU LOT CAN SHOVE OFF! GET LOST!!
FWISH
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT THE RUMORS SAY.
YEAH, YEAH. VERY CLEVER OF YOU.
AND NOW THE AYAKASHI ARE TUMBLING IN.
WHICH WORE DOWN THE BORDER BETWEEN OUR WORLD AND THEIRS,
WERE BLASTING CANNONS AND BOMBS LIKE MAD-
DURING THE WAR, WE HUMANS

THE IMPROBABLE CITY IS WHERE THOSE AYAKASHI LIVE.

YOU'D BEST FORGET IT.
IT AIN'T A PLACE WHERE HUMANS CAN WALTZ IN AND RETURN SAFELY.

I'LL TELL YOU WHY.
I *MUST* GO TO THAT CITY.
BUT HERE'S THE THING,

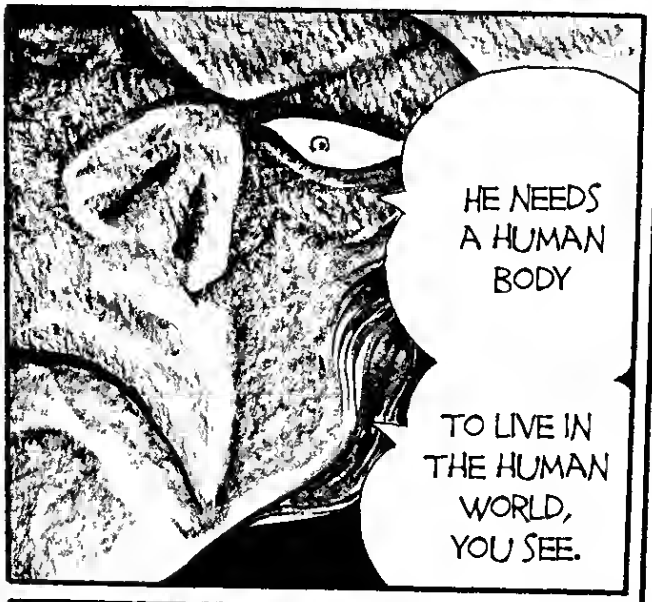
DURING THE WAR, I - KIDO JUNPEI, PRIVATE SECOND CLASS - WAS IN THE SOUTHERN JUNGLES.


WE WERE BLOWN APART WITHOUT SEEING ONE ENEMY SOLDIER.

WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS ON A FIELD HOSPITAL'S BED.
INSTEAD OF TREATING ME, THE DOCTOR GAVE ME POISON FOR SUICIDE.
CLUNK
HALF OF MY HEAD AND BODY WAS GONE.

NURSE...?
HELP...
I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
HELP ME...
I HAVE A FIANCEE BACK HOME.
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP

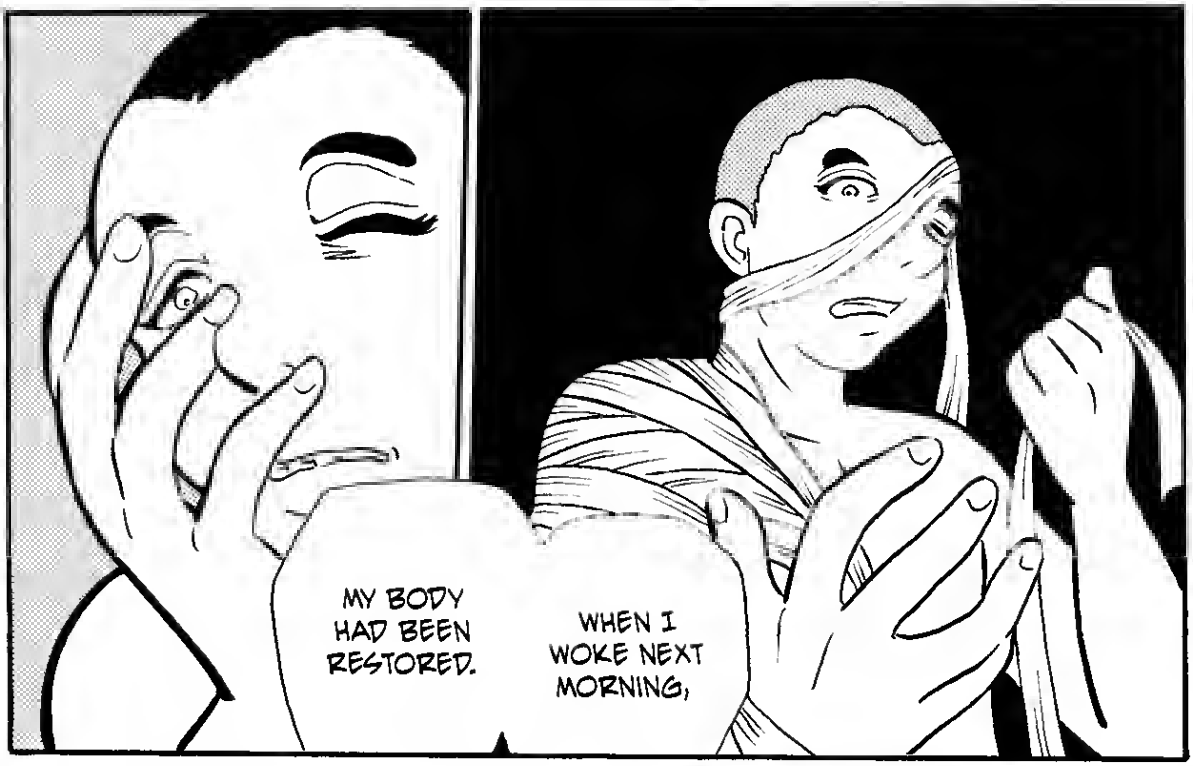
IT WASN'T THE NURSE.
I'LL HELP YOU.

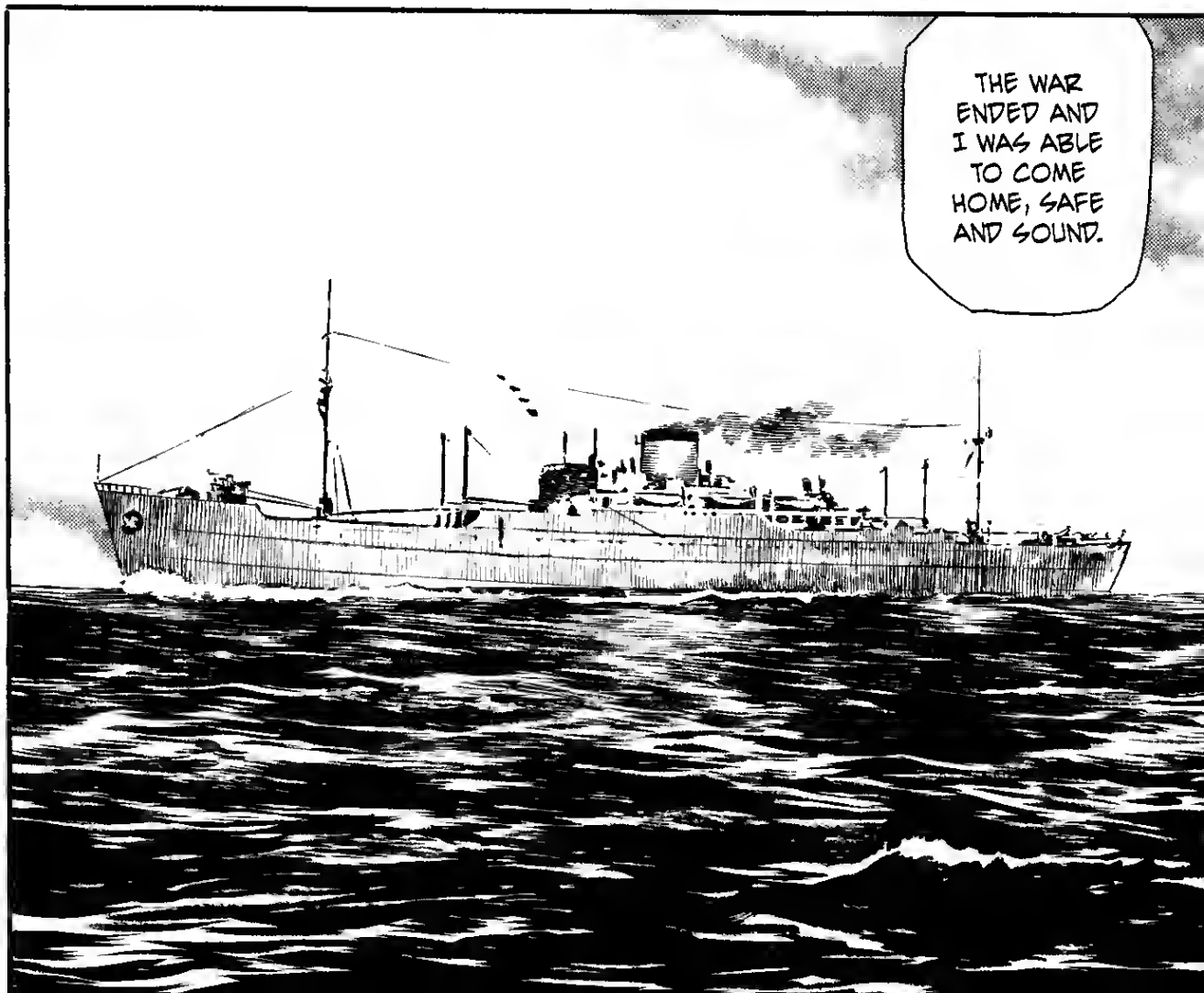

HE NEEDS A HUMAN BODY
TO LIVE IN THE HUMAN WORLD, YOU SEE.

YOUR CHILD...?

IF YOU LET ME STICK MY CHILD ONTO YOUR BODY.
I'LL SAVE YOUR LIFE

THIS.
AHHH!!


WHEN I WOKE NEXT MORNING,
MY BODY HAD BEEN RESTORED.


THE WAR ENDED AND I WAS ABLE TO COME HOME, SAFE AND SOUND.

BUT SOMETHING'S OFF LATELY...
MY BODY IS BEING TAKEN OVER.
I'M SLOWLY LOSING MYSELF.
"I MUST RETURN SOMEWHERE" - THAT'S HOW I FEEL.
SQUISH
AND NOT JUST MY BODY - MY HEART, TOO.

SOMEONE'S VOICE IS CALLING.
I HEAR MOTHER CALLING TO ME.

SQUELCH
TAKE ME TO THE IMPROBABLE CITY.
PLEASE, SHAO TSU.

SO WE'LL MEET UP TOMORROW.
HMM WHEW
I'VE SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF FIRST,
CAN'T BE HELPED, THEN.
SHAO TSU...?

WELL COME, MY SON.
SHAO TSU, WHERE ARE YOU?
DAMN, WHAT A MIST! I CAN'T SEE A THING.
TAP
TAP

slither
slither
NOW, LET'S GO BACK
TO OUR CITY.

SQUELCH

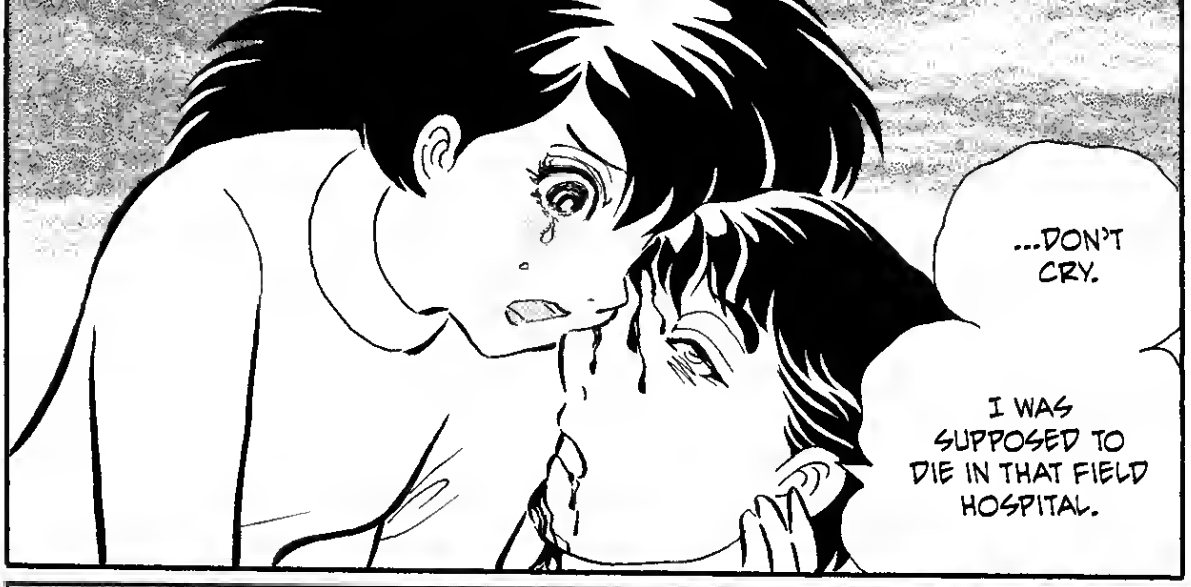
...ALL RIGHT, MOTHER.

CRACK
WHOA THERE, NOT SO FAST!!
GYAA
GYAA
HANG IN THERE, MASTER!
HALF OF YOU DID TURN INTO A MONSTER,
BUT THE OTHER HALF IS STILL YOURSELF!
SQUELCH
SQUELCH

LOOK, I BROUGHT YOUR FIANCEE!
LIVE IN THE HUMAN WORLD WITH YOUR BELOVED OR JOIN THAT THING IN THE IMPROBABLE CITY!
THINK CAREFULLY, NOW!!
YOU CAME HOME ALIVE FROM THE WAR!
LET'S LIVE TOGETHER IN THIS WORLD!!
DON'T GO, JUNPEI-SAN!

I SAVED YOUR LIFE! DID YOU FORGET?
YOU ARE MY SON.
COME WITH ME.
WHAT... WHAT SHOULD I DO...!?

ドリブオ!!
SPLATCH
JUNPEI-SAN!
ギャ
ギャ
WAAA
WAAA
WAAA
WAAA
WAAA
OH, NO!


...DON'T CRY.
I WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE IN THAT FIELD HOSPITAL.

I'M HAPPY ENOUGH
THAT AT LEAST HALF OF ME COULD COME HOME

AND DIE IN MY GIRL'S ARMS...

◎END◎

Chapter 29: Children of the Misty Night

FATHER!
MOTHER!
EEK...!?
SOB, SOB...
WHERE ARE YOU?

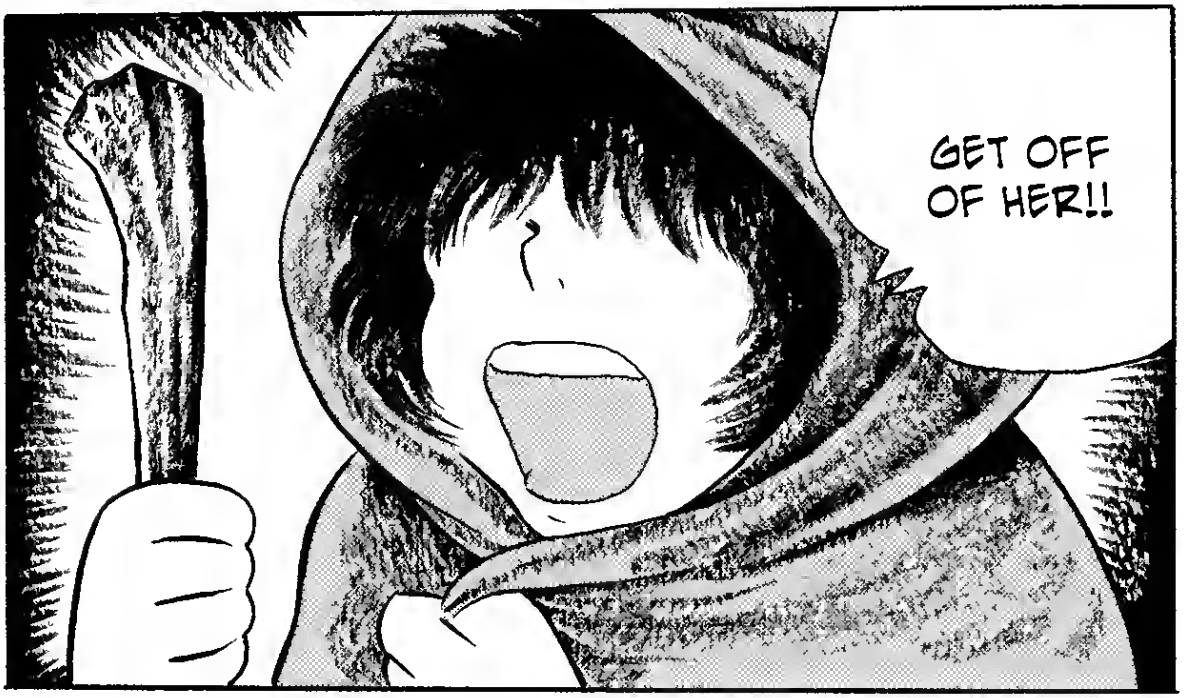
NOW COME WITH ME.
YOUR PARENTS ARE DEAD, LITTLE GIRL.

...THE MIST IS SPREADING.

ALL RIGHT!
HEREABOUTS SHOULD DO IT.
I'M HUNGRY...
SOB, SOB!
MOTHER! FATHER!
DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE!
...HERE IT COMES.

GOBO GOBO GOHM GOHM!
DAMMIT! YOU'RE NOT THE ONE I WANT!
MGAH MGU MOHG!

GOBO GOBO GOBO...
SHOO, SHOO!
BACK OFF!
GET AWAY FROM ME!!

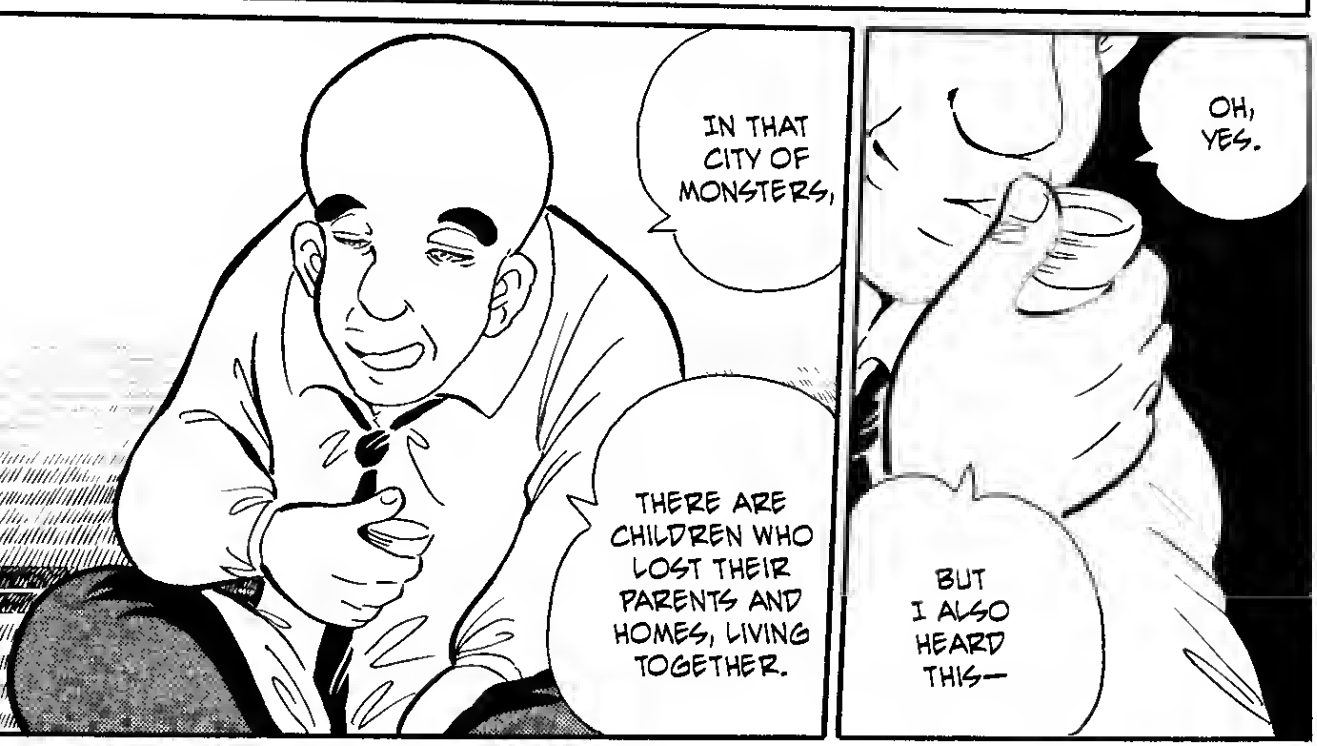

GET OFF OF HER!!

I'M HUNGRY!
I DON'T HAVE A HOME.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
GO HOME.
MY MOTHER AND FATHER BURNED TO DEATH...
FOLLOW ME.
...CAN'T BE HELPED, THEN.
SHOO, SHOO!
LEAVE HER TO ME!
SSSHH
SSSHH
SOMEPLACE NICE.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

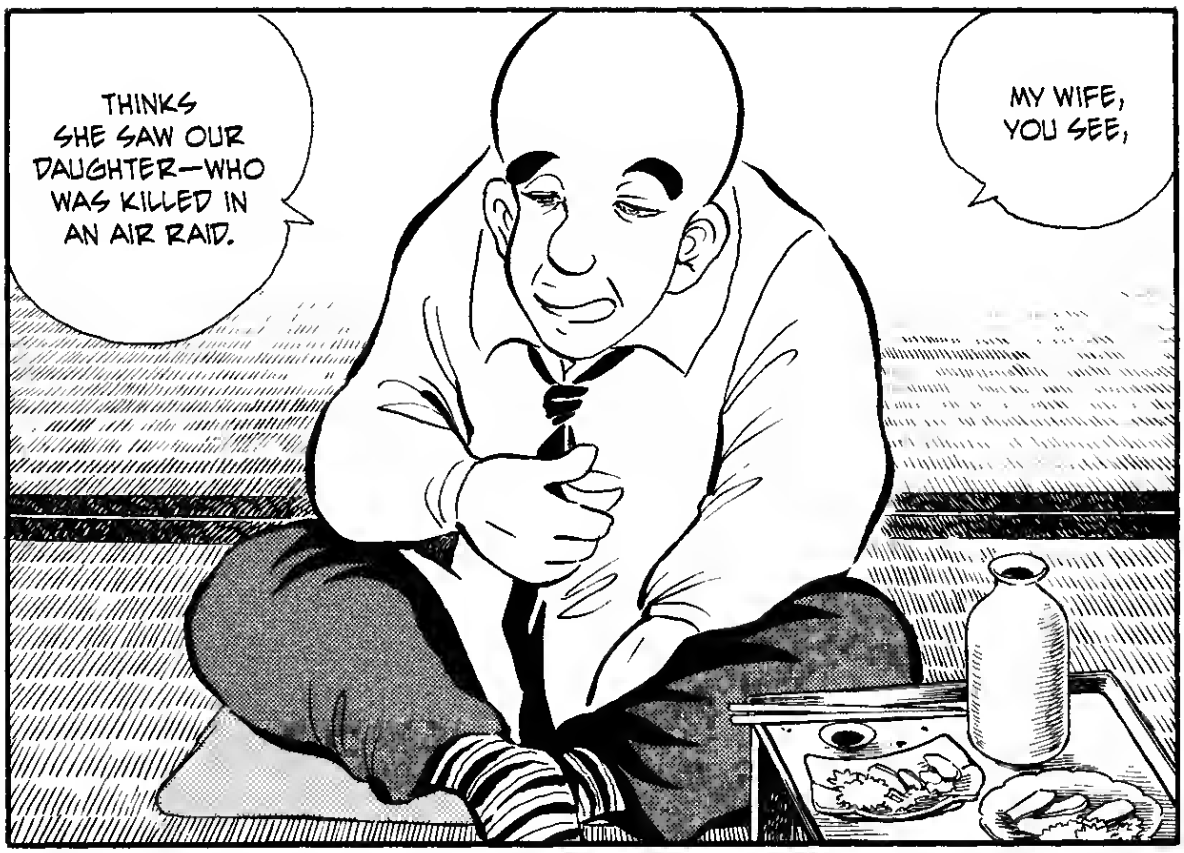
SAY,
HAVE YOU HEARD
OF THE IMPROBABLE CITY?

WE BLASTED SO MANY BOMBS AND CANNONS IN THE WAR
THAT WE RIPPED A HOLE TO THE OTHERWORLD.

AND THROUGH THAT HOLE CAME HORDES OF MONSTERS.
THE IMPROBABLE CITY IS WHERE THEY GATHER.


IN THAT CITY OF MONSTERS,
THERE ARE CHILDREN WHO LOST THEIR PARENTS AND HOMES, LIVING TOGETHER.
OH, YES.
BUT I ALSO HEARD THIS—

I HEAR THAT YOUR WOUNDS HEAL, YOU DON'T GET HUNGRY,
AND YOU'LL NEVER DIE IN THAT CITY.
ARE YOU FROM THAT CITY, TOO?
SAY—


MY WIFE, YOU SEE,
THINKS SHE SAW OUR DAUGHTER—WHO WAS KILLED IN AN AIR RAID.

ONE MISTY NIGHT,
SHE INSISTS SHE SAW HER.

PERHAPS OUR GIRL IS LIVING IN THIS IMPROBABLE CITY.
OUR DAUGHTER... MAIKO IS HER NAME.
WILL YOU LOOK FOR HER?

ASKED BY OUR PARENTS AND RELATIVES TO BRING US BACK.
OH YES, NOW AND THEN
FOLKS LIKE YOU COME HERE.
You came too late!
Go home, go home!

Get out!
Get out!
ROAARRR
Get out of our city!

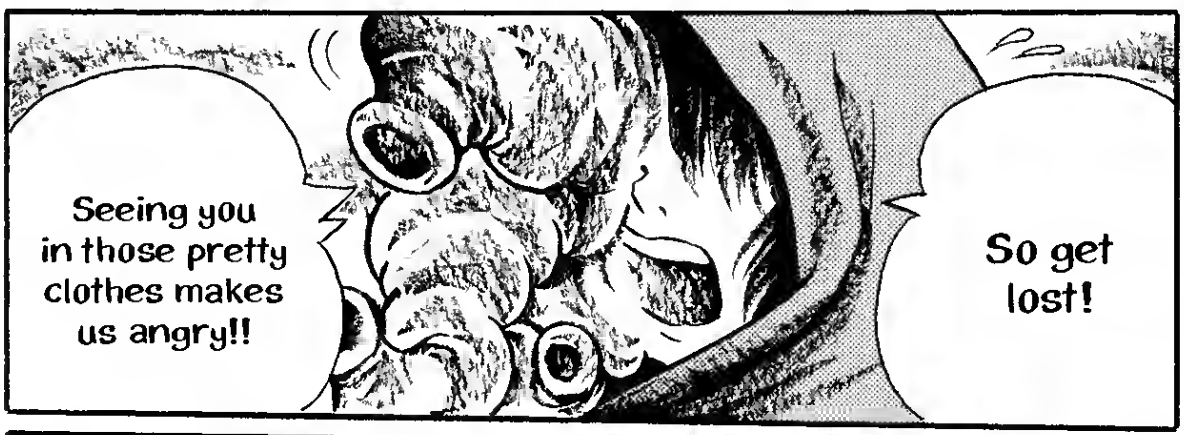
YOU END UP LIKE THE DENIZENS HERE.
YOUR BODY CHANGES.
SQUIRT

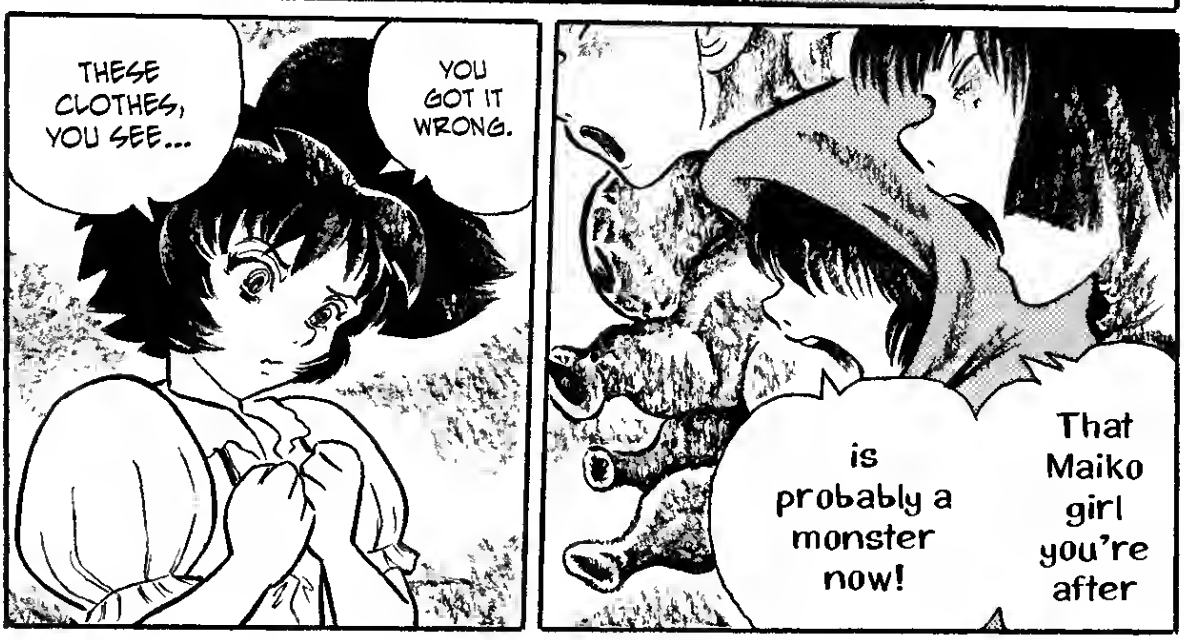
BUT—
ONLY WAIFS AND STRAYS COME HERE.

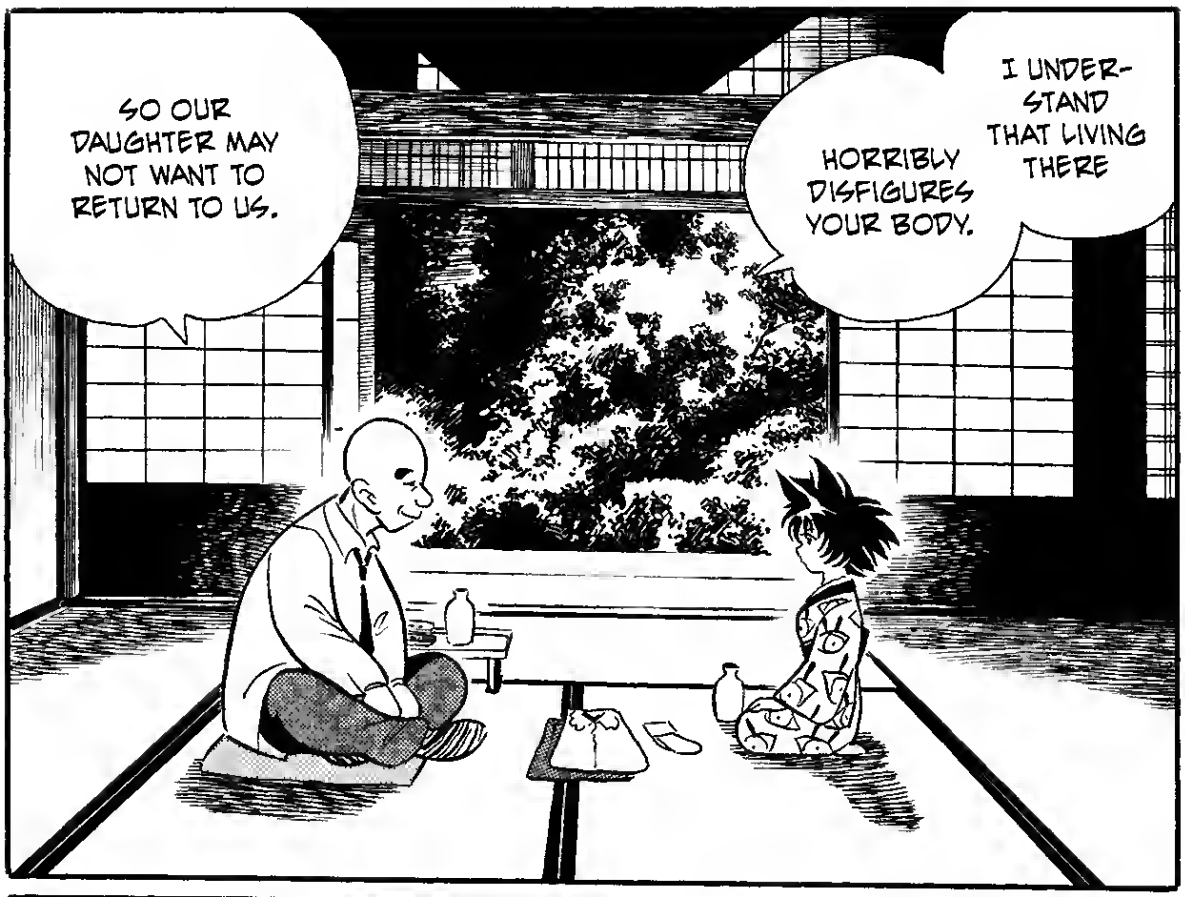
TRUE,
YOU WON'T DIE OR GO HUNGRY IN THIS CITY.

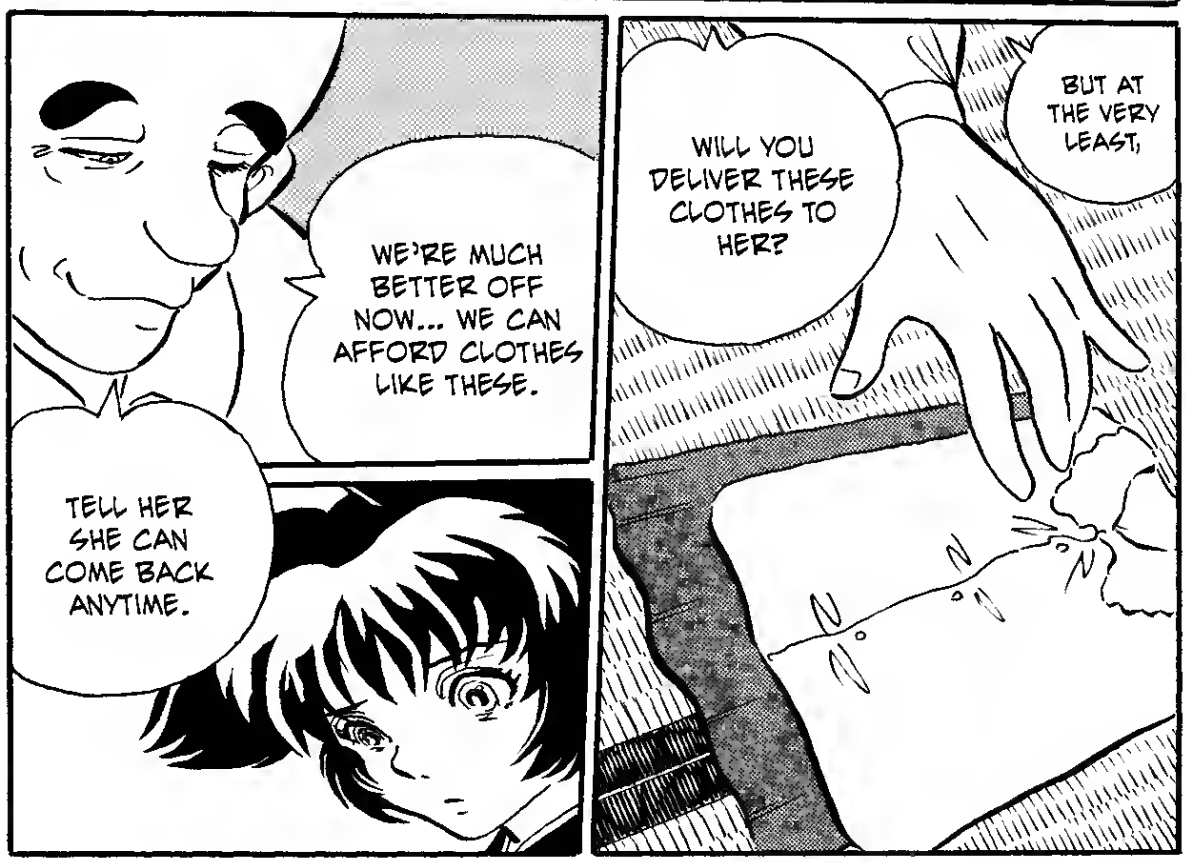
SEE? IT'S TOO LATE.

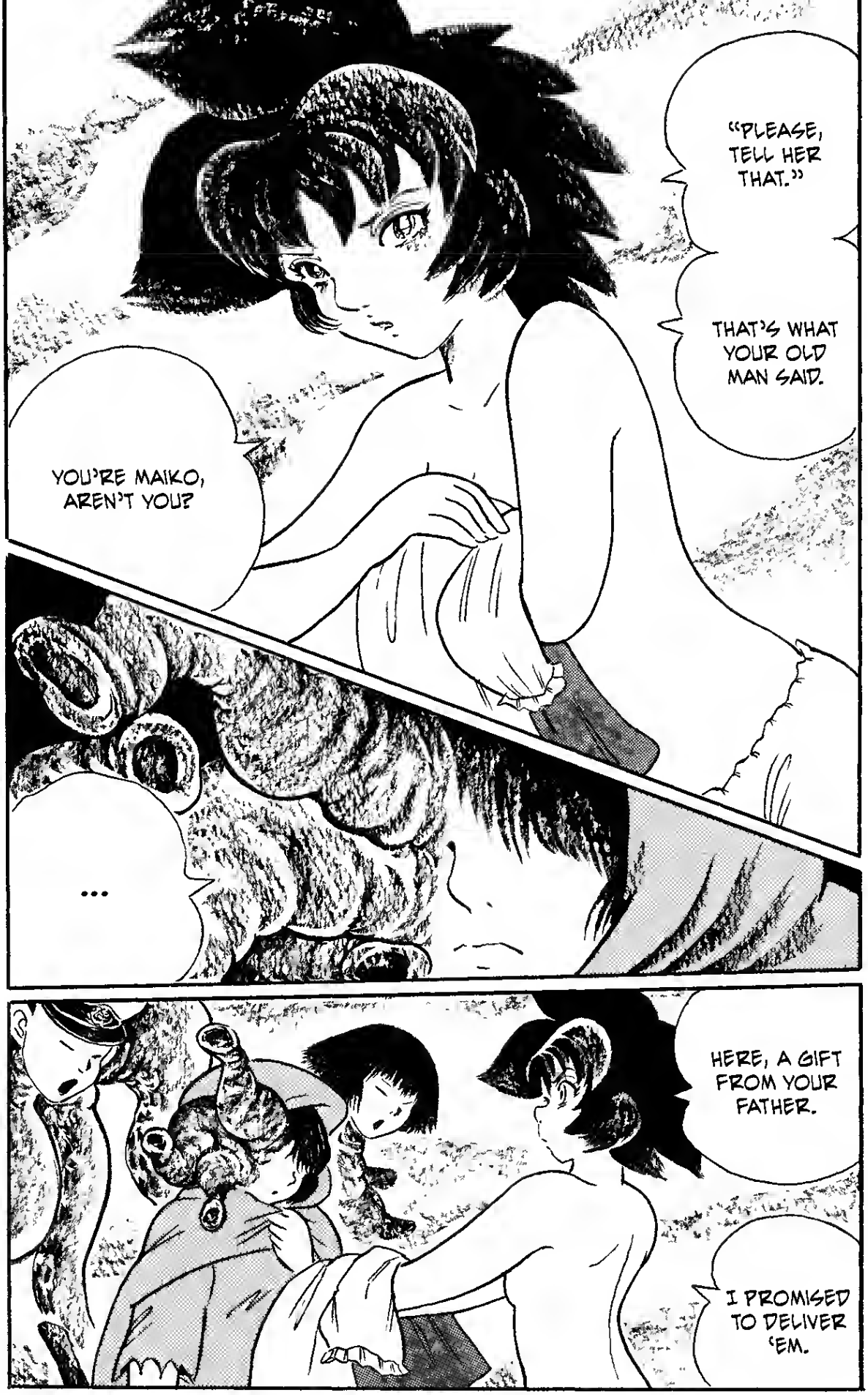
That's why we're staying here.
They don't care about kids who lost their homes and family!
Those dumb adults started the war, and lost the war!


Seeing you in those pretty clothes makes us angry!!
So get lost!

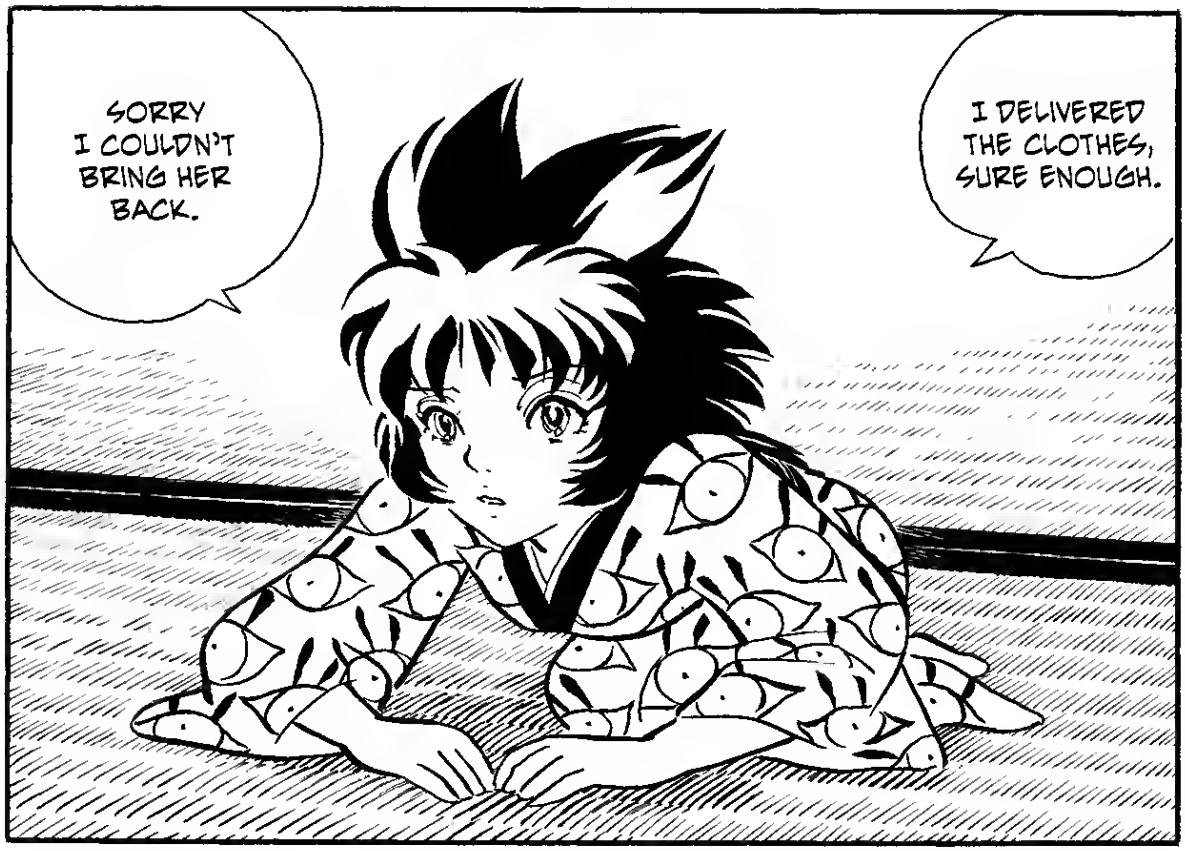

THESE CLOTHES, YOU SEE...
YOU GOT IT WRONG.
That Maiko girl you're after is probably a monster now!

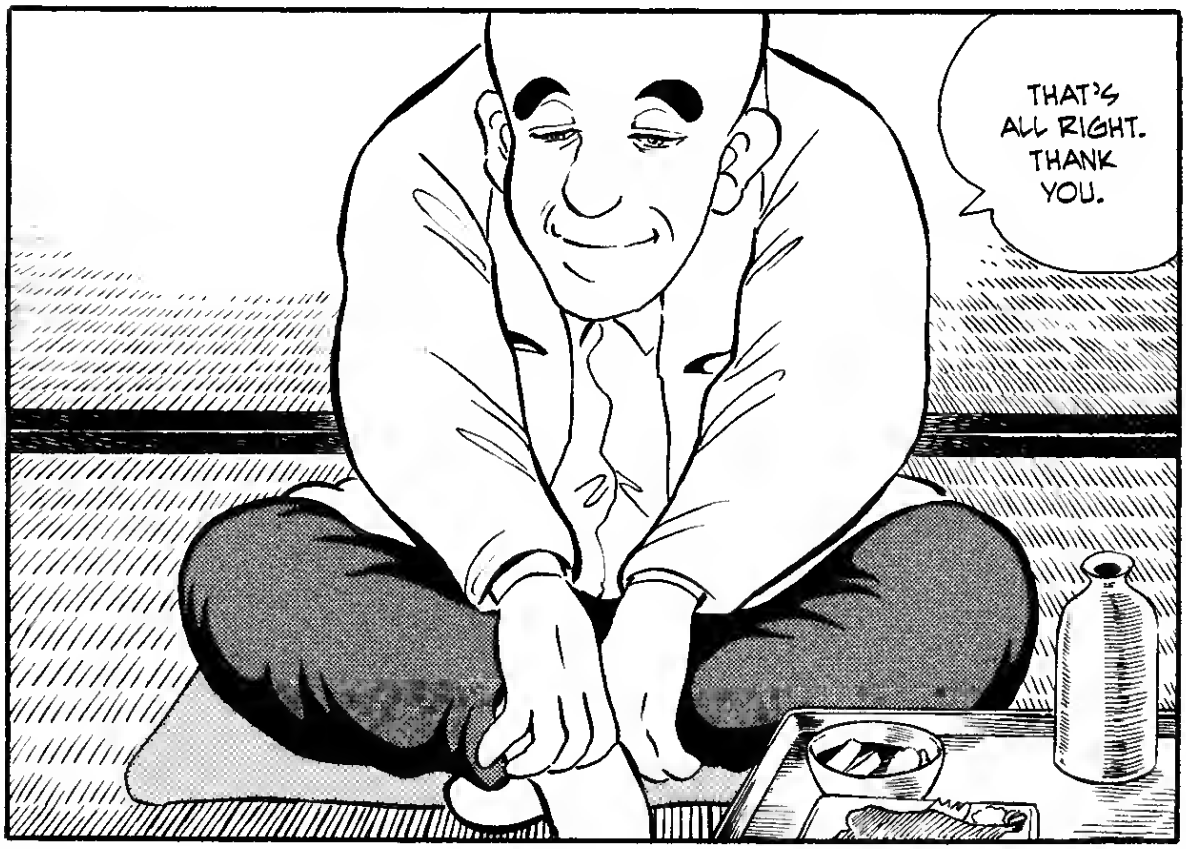

SO OUR DAUGHTER MAY NOT WANT TO RETURN TO US.
I UNDERSTAND THAT LIVING THERE HORRIBLY DISFIGURES YOUR BODY.

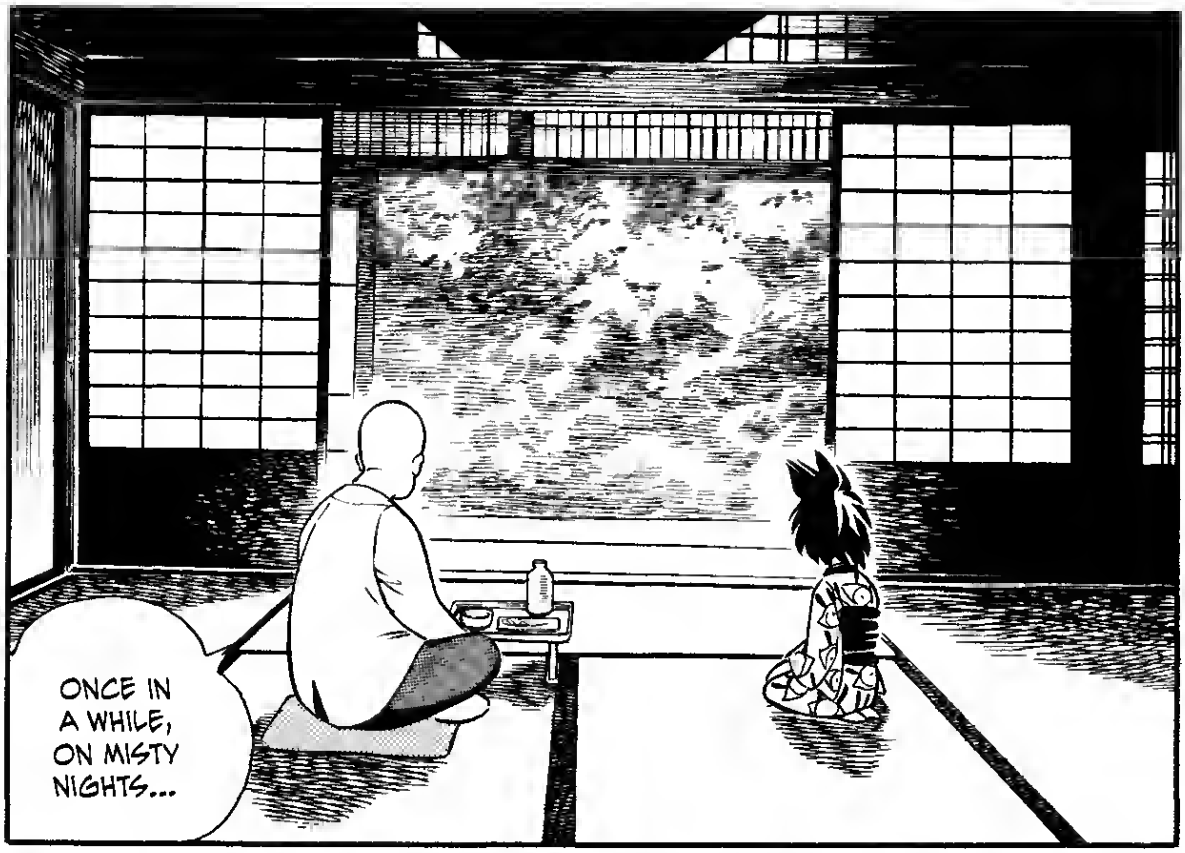

WE'RE MUCH BETTER OFF NOW... WE CAN AFFORD CLOTHES LIKE THESE.
TELL HER SHE CAN COME BACK ANYTIME.
WILL YOU DELIVER THESE CLOTHES TO HER?
BUT AT THE VERY LEAST,

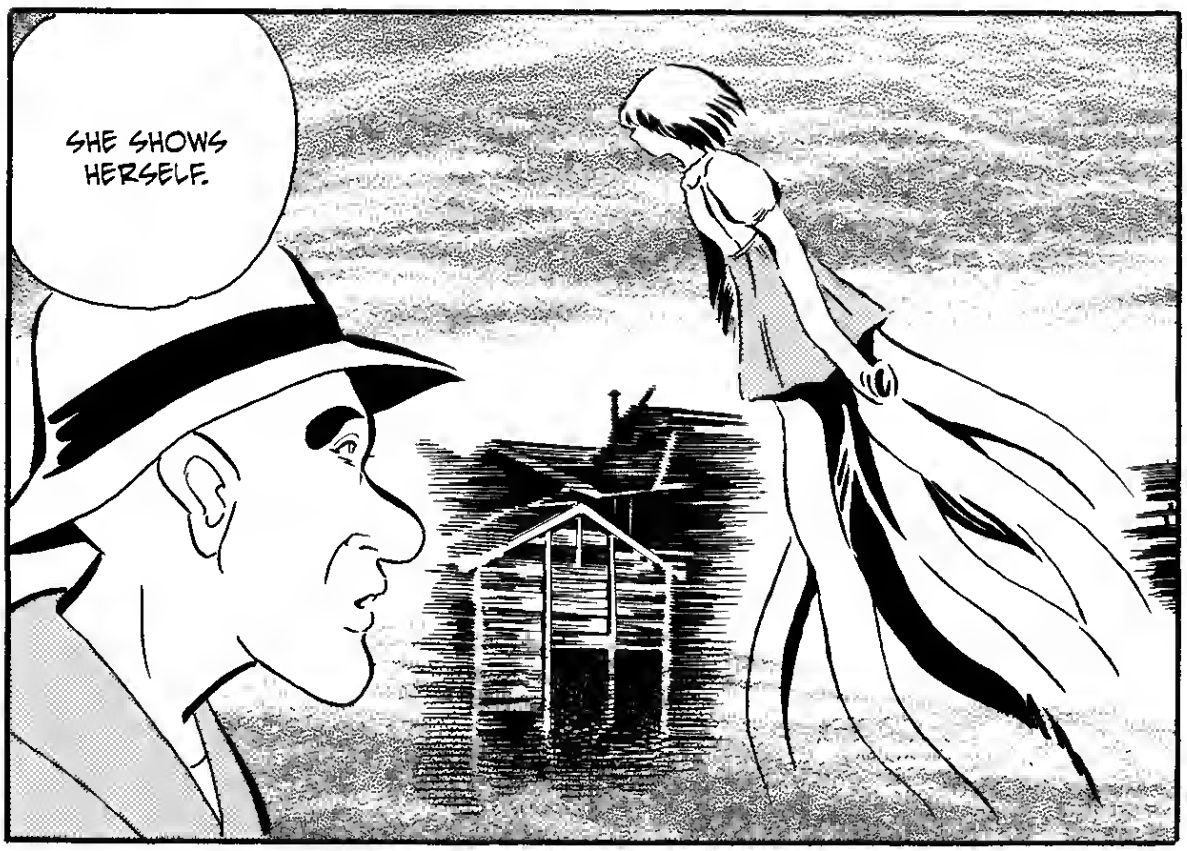

"PLEASE, TELL HER THAT."
THAT'S WHAT YOUR OLD MAN SAID.
YOU'RE MAIKO, AREN'T YOU?
...
HERE, A GIFT FROM YOUR FATHER.
I PROMISED TO DELIVER 'EM.

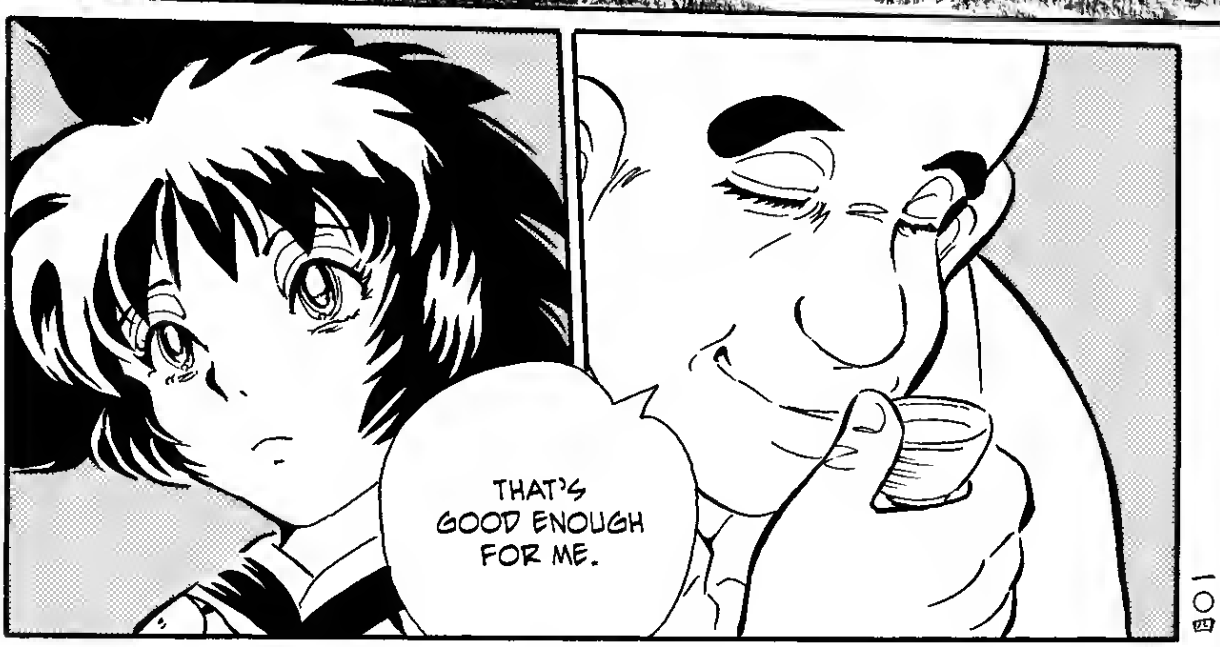
Are you sure that's okay?
You're letting her go?
D'you want to go home too?
TRY ANYTHING FUNNY AND YOU'LL REGRET IT.
I'M LEAVING NOW.
You want to go home? Then go!
It's nice to have a home waiting for you.


SORRY I COULDN'T BRING HER BACK.
I DELIVERED THE CLOTHES, SURE ENOUGH.


THAT'S ALL RIGHT. THANK YOU.


ONCE IN A WHILE, ON MISTY NIGHTS...

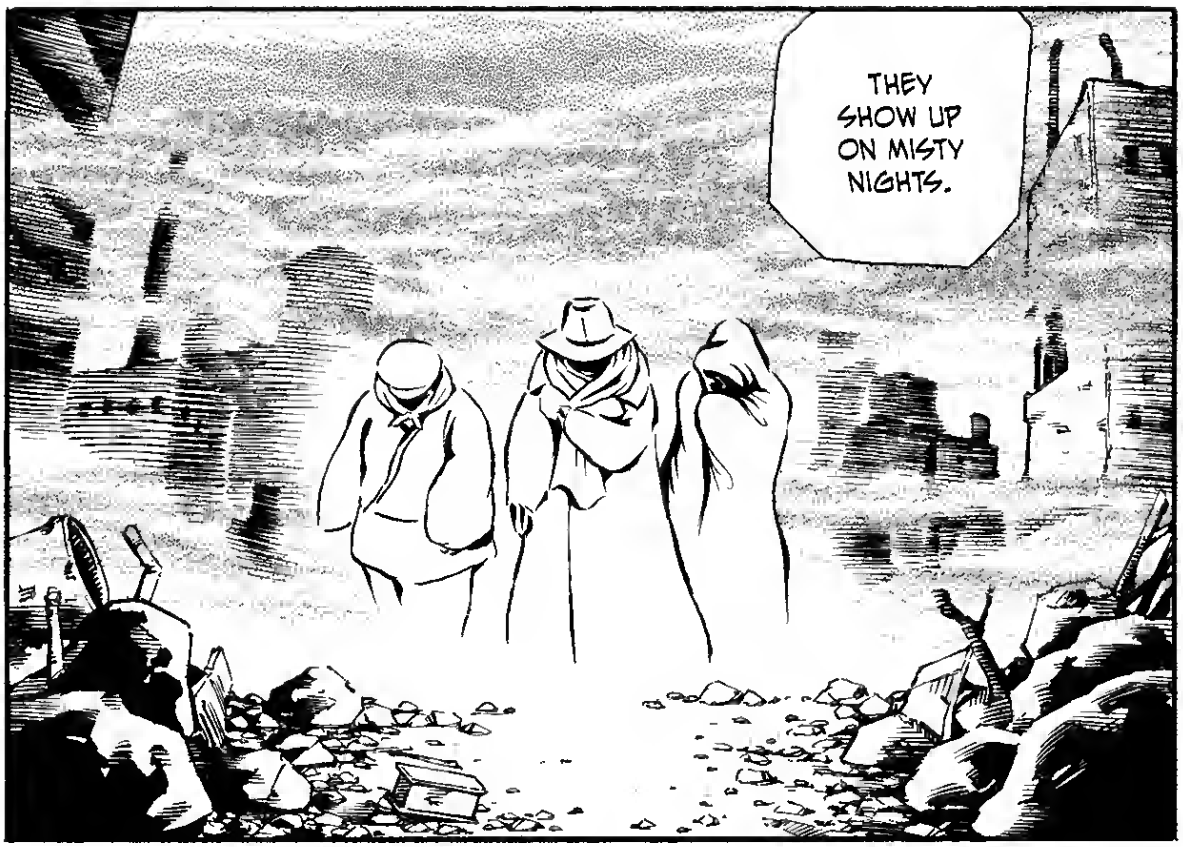

SHE SHOWS HERSELF.



©ENDO©

Chapter 30:
A Tale of the Sky

I HAVE TO EAT.
I'M NOT IN THIS BUSINESS 'CAUSE I LIKE IT.
WE'VE HAD SOME STRANGE CUSTOMERS LATELY.
MOST OF OUR CLIENTS ARE AMERICANS, BUT—
EVERYONE'S THE SAME.


THEY SHOW UP ON MISTY NIGHTS.

BUT THEY AREN'T HUMANS.
THEY PRETEND TO BE HUMANS,

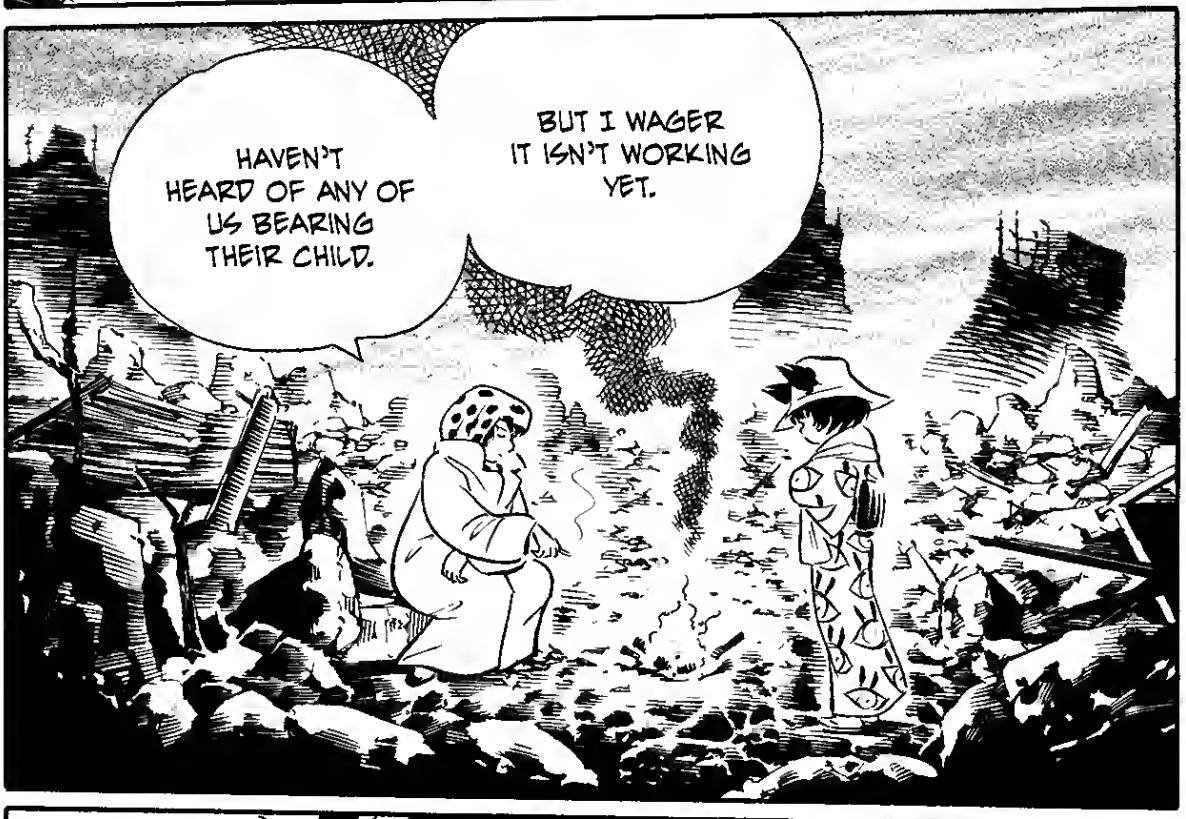
WE ALL KNOW IT AND PRETEND NOT TO NOTICE.
AFTER ALL, THEY PAY VERY WELL.

THEY AREN'T PEOPLE, BUT THEY'RE OUR TOP CLIENTS.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY GOT THEIR GOLD. THE AMERICANS ARE ALWAYS HAPPY TO CHANGE THEM INTO OUR CASH.

SO ALL THE BANGING AND BLASTING FROM THE WAR RIPPED HOLES TO THE OTHERWORLD—
AND THEY COME FROM THERE, EH?
WHAT'S THAT? THEY CAME FROM ANOTHER WORLD? I'M NOT SURPRISED.

HUH.
THEY WANT CHILDREN?
I SEE... BUT WHY DO THEY WANT HUMAN WOMEN, THEN?

TO LIVE IN OUR WORLD, THEY HAVE TO LATCH ONTO A HUMAN
OR HAVE CHILDREN WITH US, YOU SAY? WELL I NEVER...


HAVEN'T HEARD OF ANY OF US BEARING THEIR CHILD.
BUT I WAGER IT ISN'T WORKING YET.

MY BODY GOT REALLY MESSED UP.
INSTEAD, AFTER TAKING THEM IN SO MANY TIMES,

SOON I'LL TURN INTO ONE OF THEM COMPLETELY AND LIVE BEYOND THE MIST.
HEHEHE...
NO MORE HUMAN CLIENTS FOR ME, EH?
SQUEEZE

WELL, IT IS WHAT IT IS.
BUT SOMETHING'S BEEN BOTHERING ME.
A LITTLE WHILE AGO—
ON A MISTY NIGHT, OF COURSE—
I HEARD FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING.
I THOUGHT I HAD A CUSTOMER.
SKRSH
SKRSH

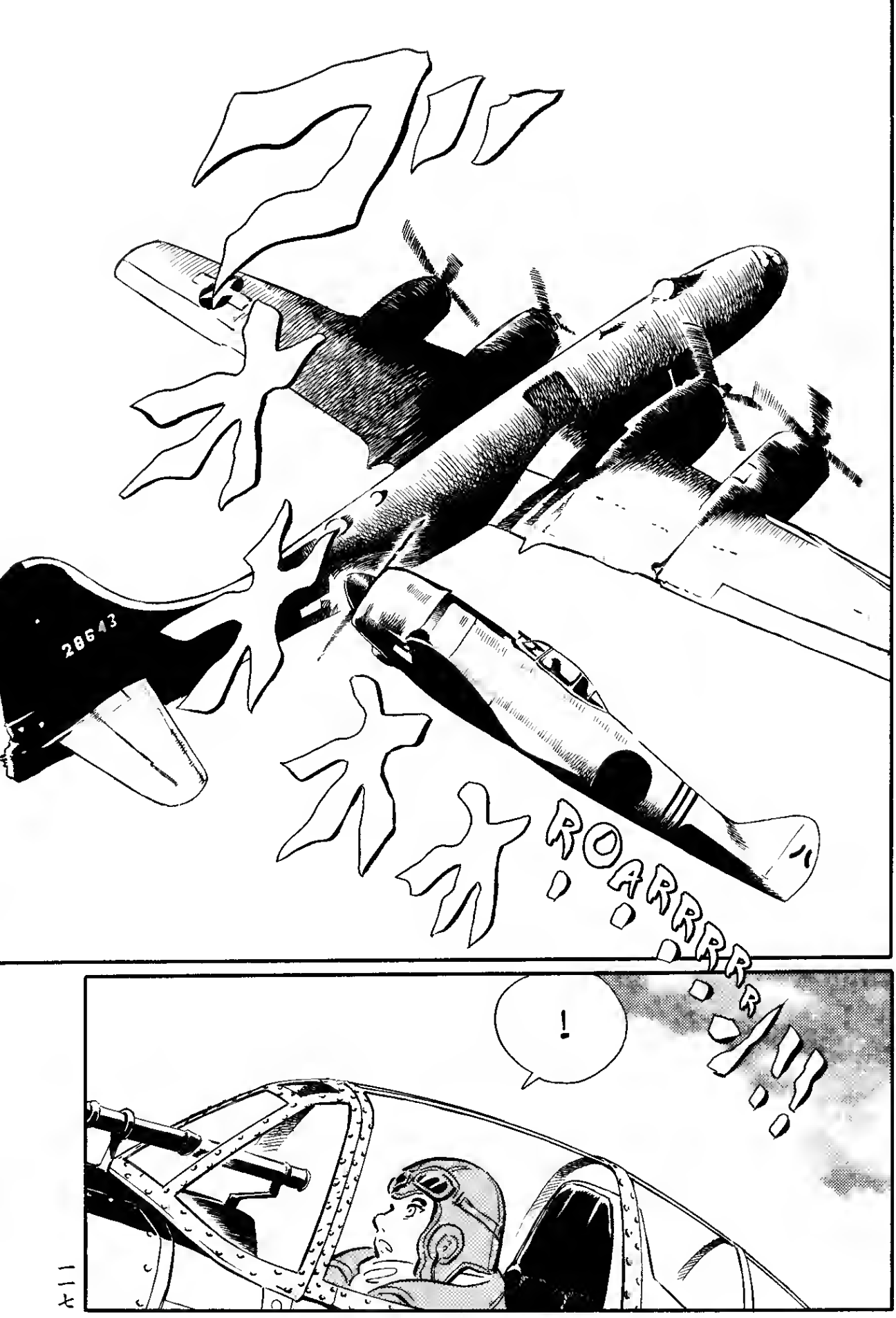
ヒタ
SKRSH
ヒタ
CHIZUKO!? IS THAT YOU, CHIZUKO?
!
W-WHO ARE YOU...!?

KIKUO...
-SAN?
IT'S ME,
KIKUO!
NO!
NO!
NOOOOO!!
YOU'RE
DEAD!
YOU'RE
SUPPOSED TO
BE DEAD!
CHIZUKO,
WAIT! WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?
WAIT
FOR ME!

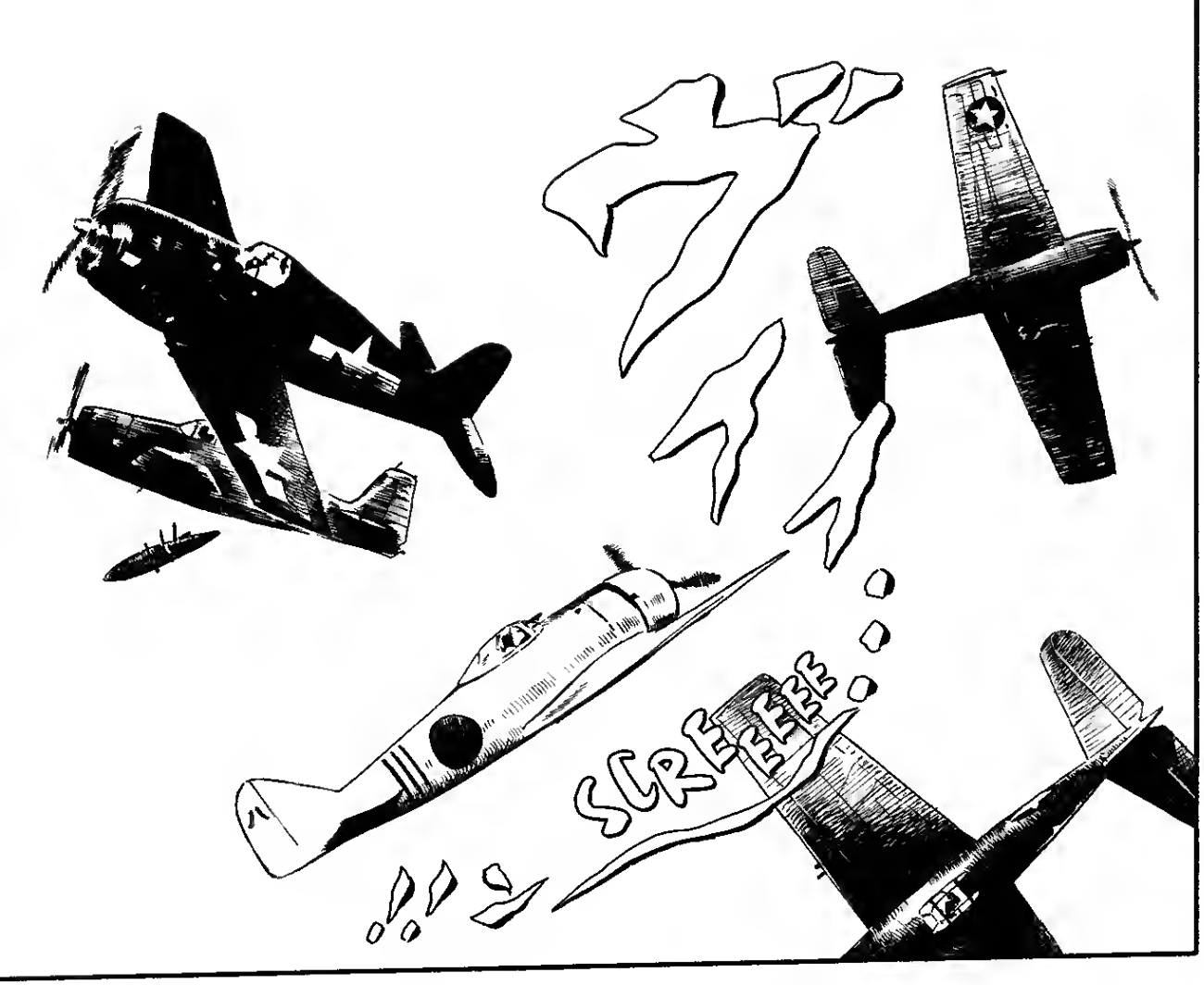
I WOULDN'T HAVE BECOME LIKE THIS!
YOU DIED IN THE WAR! THIS IS TOO MUCH—IF I KNEW YOU WERE COMING HOME,

WHO DIED IN THE WAR.
MY HUSBAND, KIKUO,
THAT'S RIGHT, IT WAS MY HUSBAND.

SHE LOOKED VERY DIFFERENT, BUT IT WAS MY WIFE.
WHY DID SHE RUN AWAY?
THAT WAS DEFINITELY CHIZUKO.
WHERE AM I?
WAIT—
WASN'T I FLYING OVER TOKYO
TO SHOOT DOWN THE ENEMY'S B29S?
BRRRRRRR


28643
ROARRRRR!!!
!

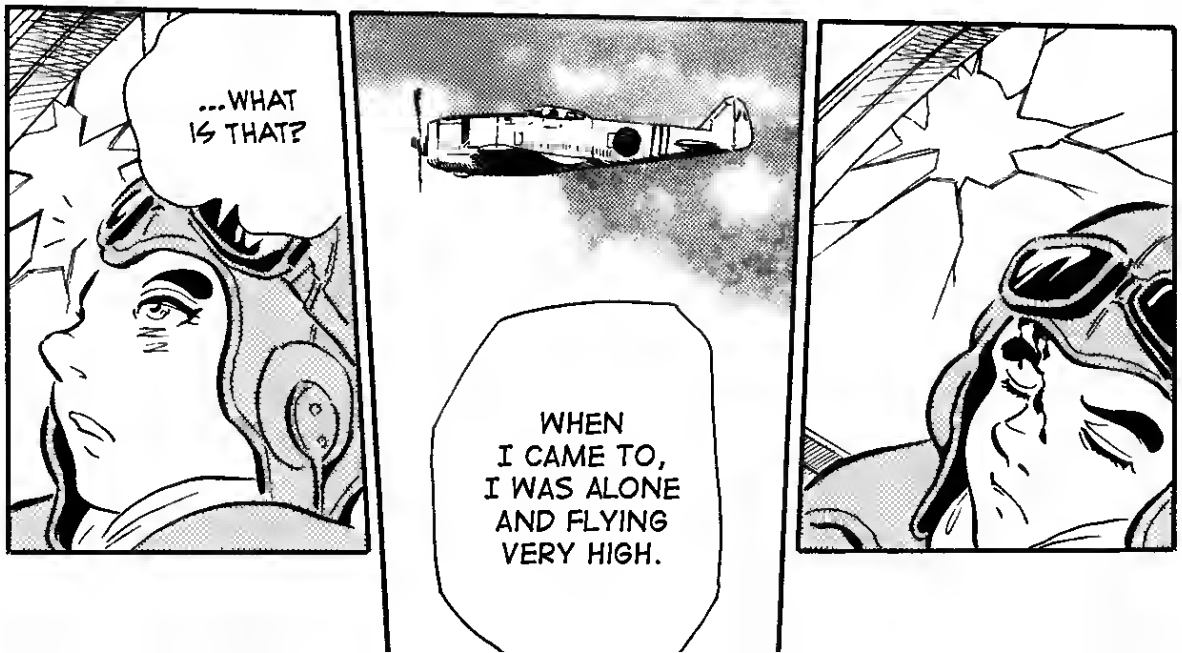
ROARRRR
SHIT, THOSE ARE FGFS!
THE ENEMY'S ESCORT FIGHTERS!
RATATATA

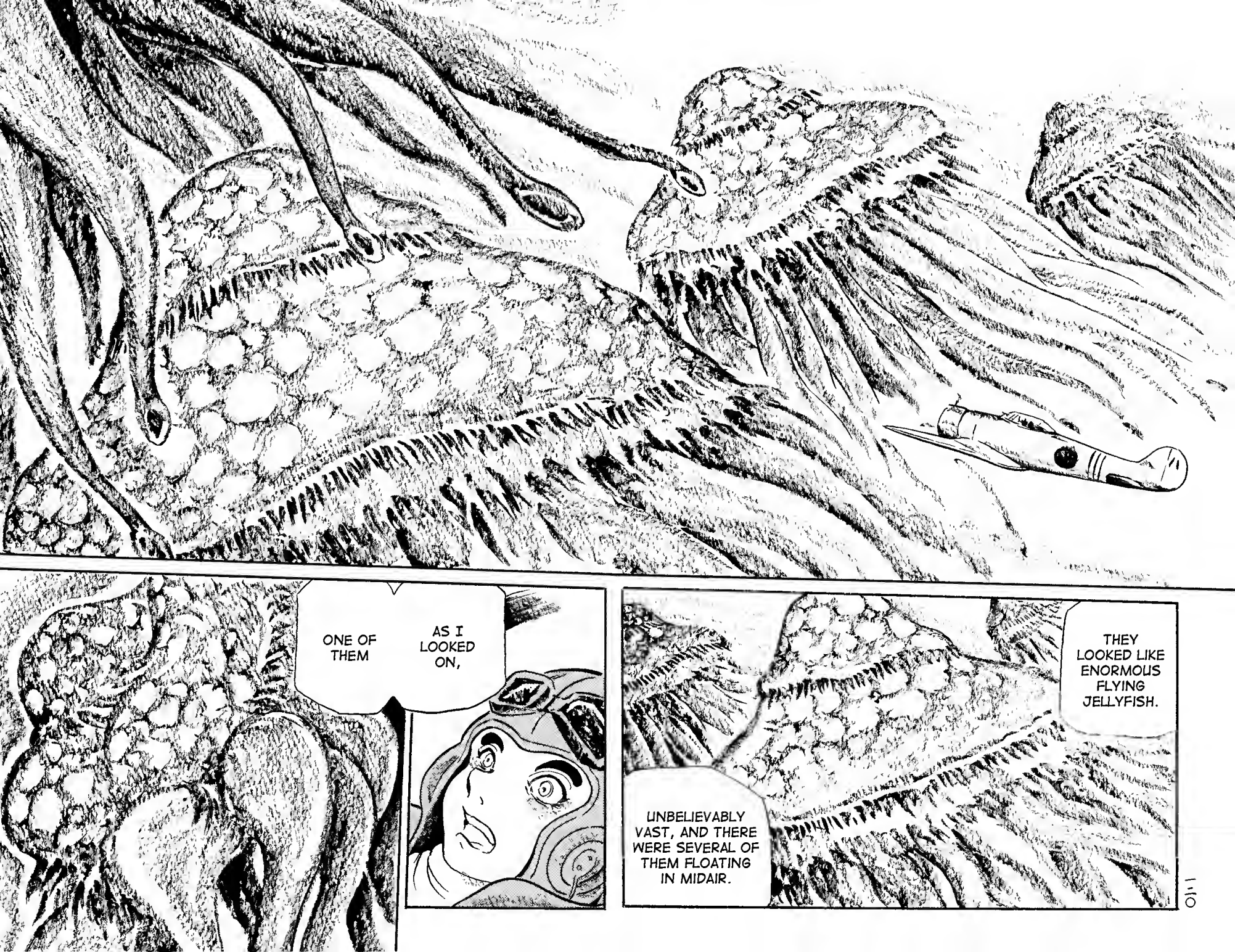


MY MIND WENT BLANK.

WAS I SHOT?

I GOT INTO A DOGFIGHT, AND THEN...




ONE OF THEM
AS I LOOKED ON,
THEY LOOKED LIKE ENORMOUS FLYING JELLYFISH.
UNBELIEVABLY VAST, AND THERE WERE SEVERAL OF THEM FLOATING IN MIDAIR.

STARTED TO CHANGE ITS SHAPE.
IT BEGAN TO LOOK LIKE A HUMAN.

CHIZUKO?
...CHIZUKO?

YES, THAT MUST BE CHIZUKO!
MY WIFE WAITING BACK HOME!
I FLEW MY PLANE STRAIGHT TOWARDS CHIZUKO.

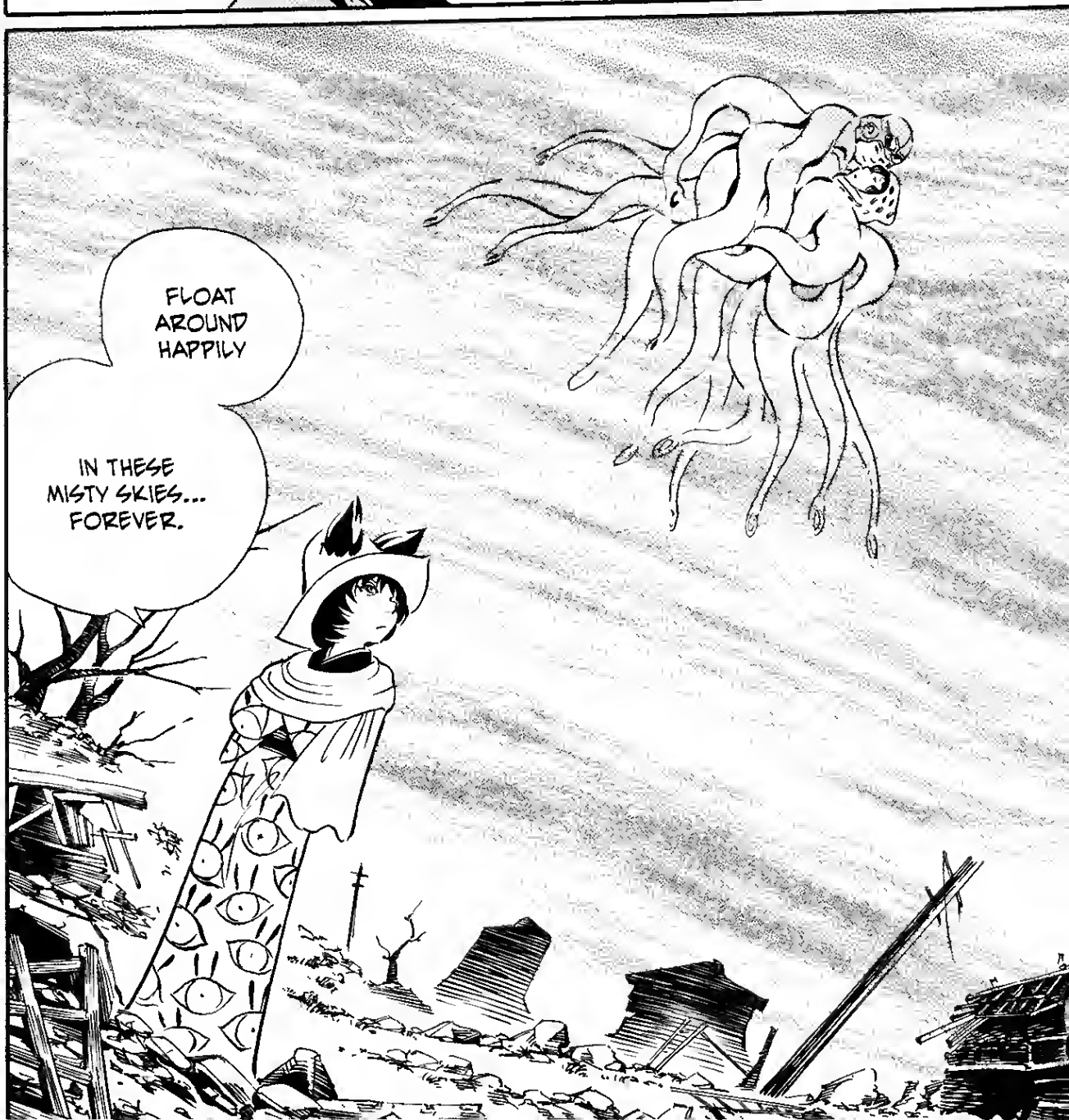
I LOST MY BEARINGS,
AND THEN...
AND—
I KNOW.
NOW, COME THIS WAY.
AND FOUND MYSELF IN THIS MIST.
THERE.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
JUST FOLLOW ME.

DEAR...
IT'S YOUR WIFE.
CHIZUKO.

SQUELCH
SQUELCH
DEAR,
MY BODY'S BECOME LIKE THIS...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
SQUELCH
SEE?
I'M THE SAME AS YOU.
NOW WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.
SQUELCH
OH, DARLING...

THAT'S RIGHT, AIN'T NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.
JUST STAY TOGETHER
AND FLOAT AROUND.


FLOAT AROUND HAPPILY
IN THESE MISTY SKIES... FOREVER.

◎END◎

Translator's Note

Prostitution in Japan ran rampant during the American Occupation years as the civilian population endured near starvation. While many prostitutes (colloquially known as "pan-pan girls") plied their trade independently, the Japanese government set up the short-lived Recreation and Amusement Associations (RAAs) in August 1945 that gathered lower-class women and girls for the benefit of Occupation troops.

The RAAs initially focused on the geisha and hostesses, but a shortage of personnel led them to "recruit" war widows and even high school students. All of this was done to protect the upper and middle-class women from being raped by the Americans (by no means an unfounded fear). While independent pan-pan learned to become tough and nasty, RAA recruits were much more vulnerable and led harshly stigmatized lives after the closure of RAAs in January 1946.

For those interested in learning more, I recommend consulting the following:
Inside GHQ by Takemae Eiji
Gate of Flesh (1964) by Seijun Suzuki

Chapter 31: The Bride of
the OoKami Family

IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
SHAO TSU!

VANISHING WITHOUT A WORD, THAT'S COLD!
WHERE DID YOU GO AFTER LEAVING ME!?
TENOME! ANEGO!

YOU'LL NEVER BECOME INDEPENDENT IF WE STAYED TOGETHER.
I'M SORRY, BUT IT WAS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
DON'T SAY THAT!
YOU HAVE TO COME BACK!
THAT'S ENOUGH. I MISS YOU TOO, YOU KNOW.
BUT WE'LL DEFINITELY MEET AGAIN SOMEDAY, SO TRAIN HARD 'TILL THEN.
ANEGO!!

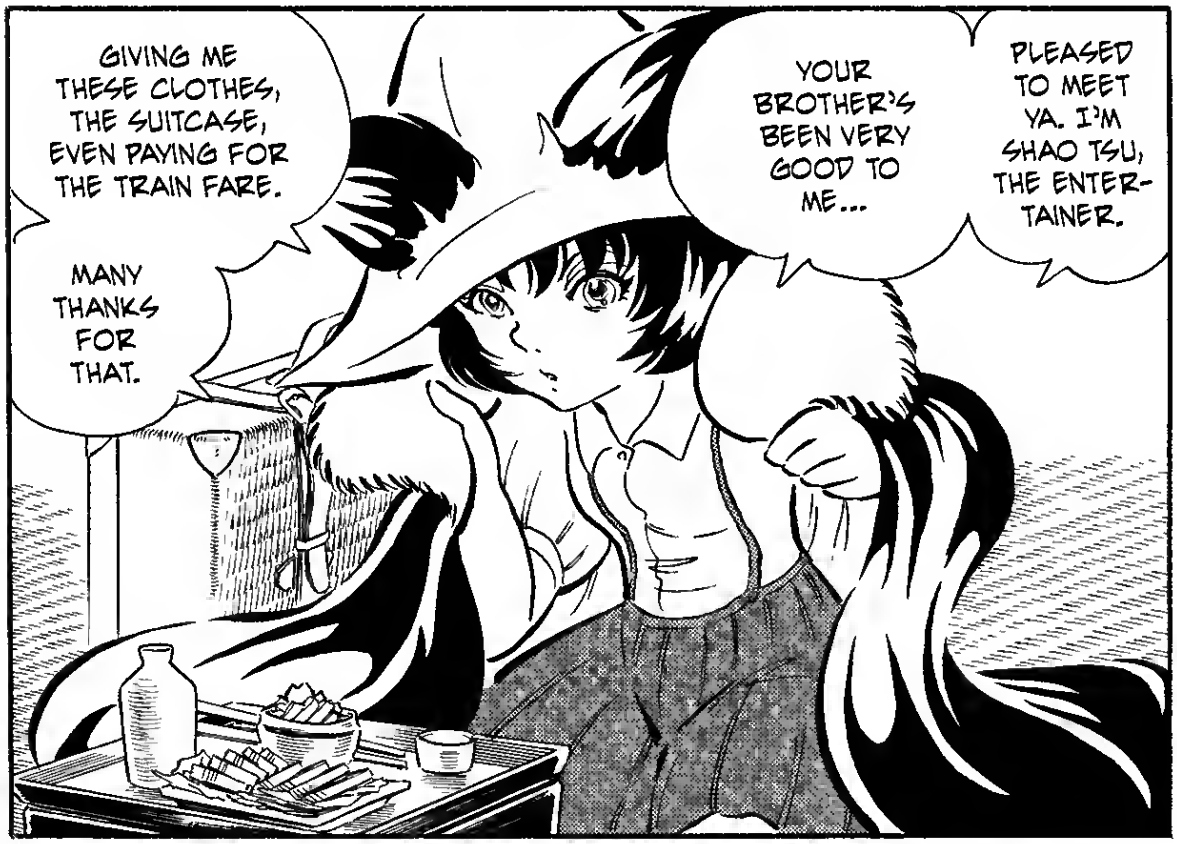
YOUR SOUL BELONGS TO YOU ALONE.
DON'T YOU EVER GIVE IT AWAY OR LET IT BE DEVOURED.
SHAO TSU—
REMEMBER THIS.

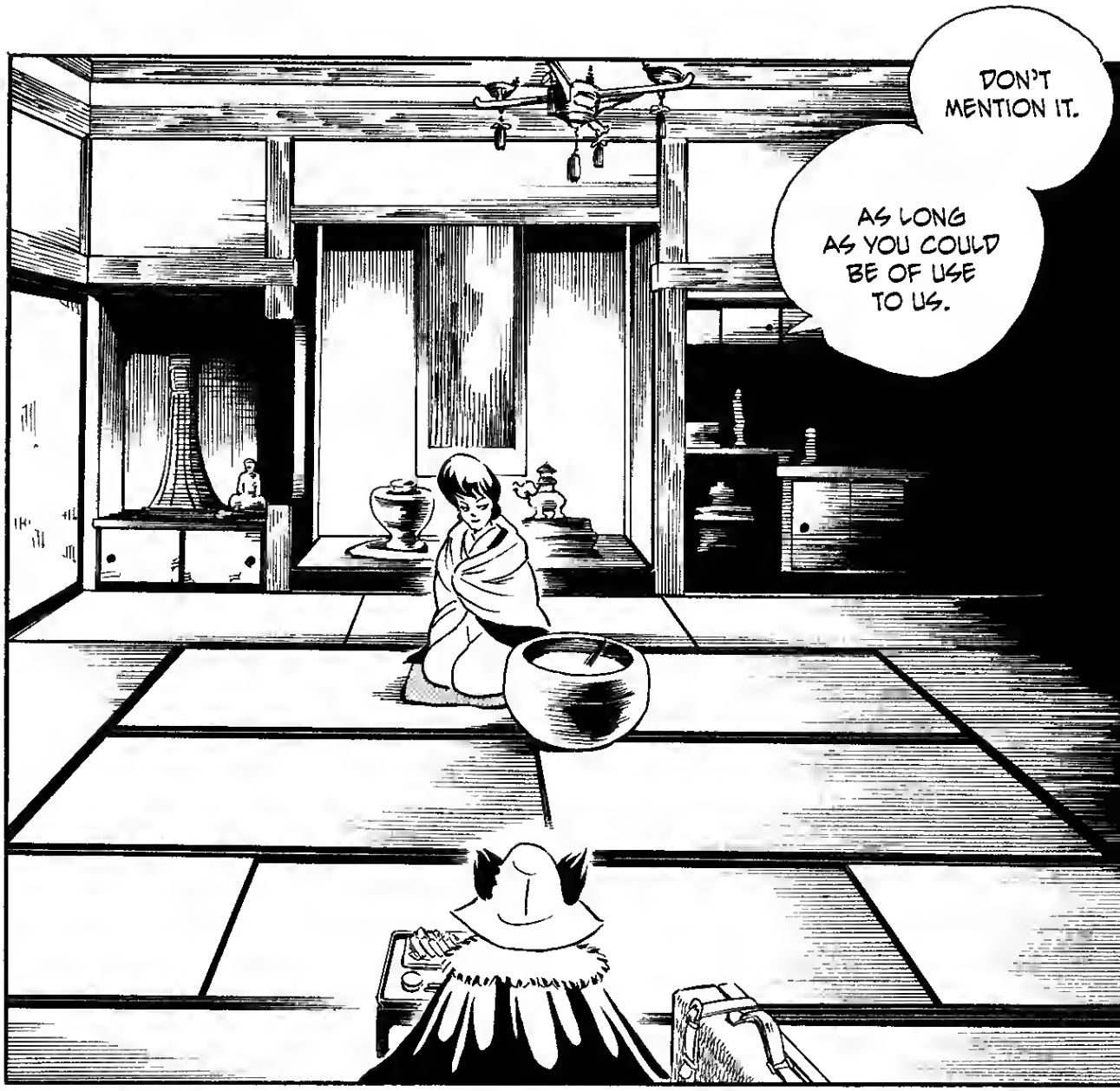
CS45
TOOT TOOT

GASHUNK
GASHUNK
GASHUNK
GASHUNK
Uuuuhm...
...A DREAM, HUH...
GASP...!
GASHUNK
GASHUNK
GASHUNK
GASHUNK
WHAT A SLEEPY PLACE.
I GUESS THOSE AIR RAIDS NEVER CAME OUT TO THE BOONIES.

BEST TO NOT GET INVOLVED.
ANOTHER GIRL COMIN' HERE ALONE, EH?
WE SAW NOTHIN'.
ALL RIGHT, THANKS.
YOU'LL SEE A BIG ROOF, CAN'T MISS IT.
THE OOKAMI HOUSE IS STRAIGHT AHEAD.
SHE AIN'T EVER LEAVING THIS VILLAGE.
AFTER ALL,

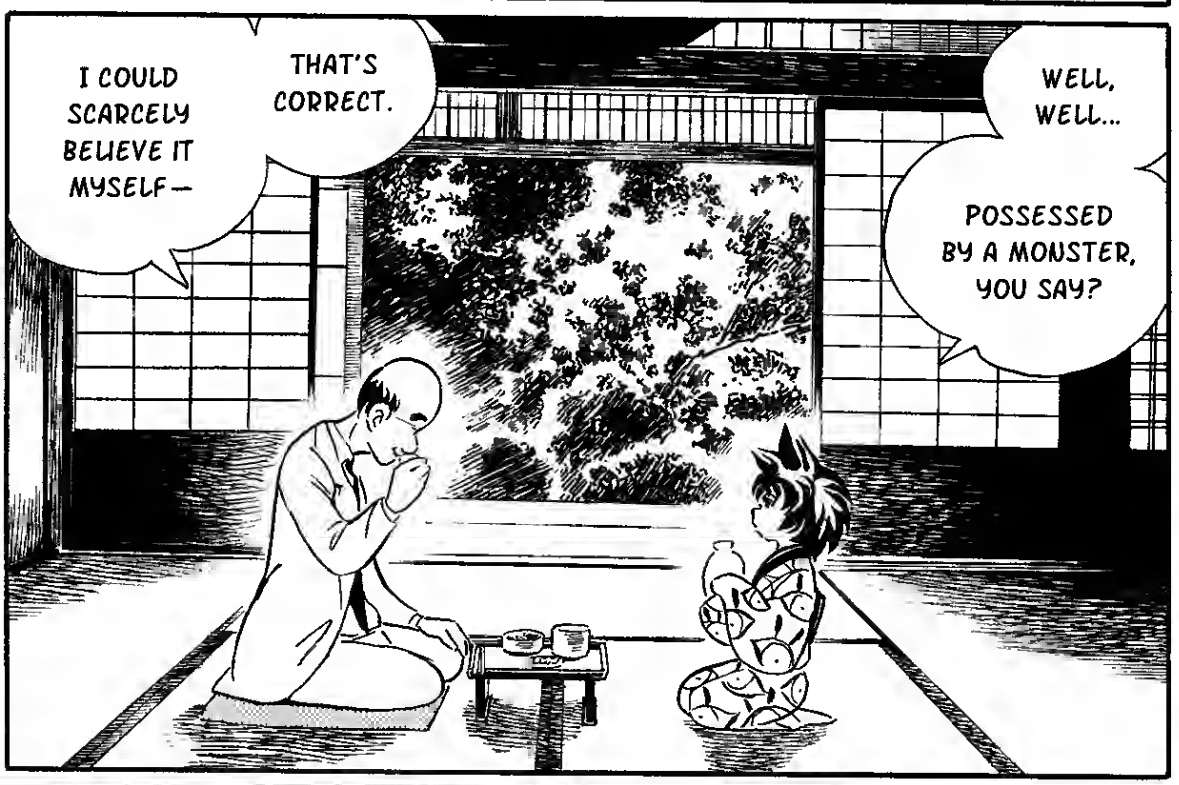
I RECEIVED YOUR LETTER FROM TOKYO.
MY NAME IS OOKAMI SACHI.

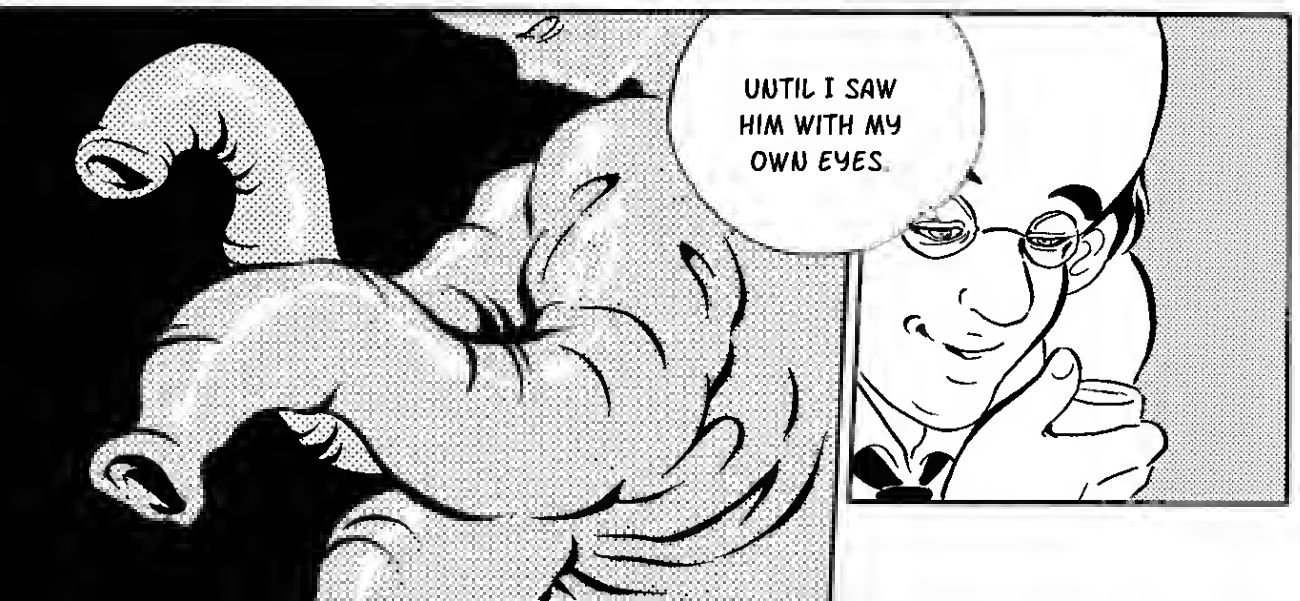

GIVING ME THESE CLOTHES, THE SUITCASE, EVEN PAYING FOR THE TRAIN FARE.
MANY THANKS FOR THAT.
YOUR BROTHER'S BEEN VERY GOOD TO ME...
PLEASED TO MEET YA. I'M SHAO TSU, THE ENTER-TAINER.

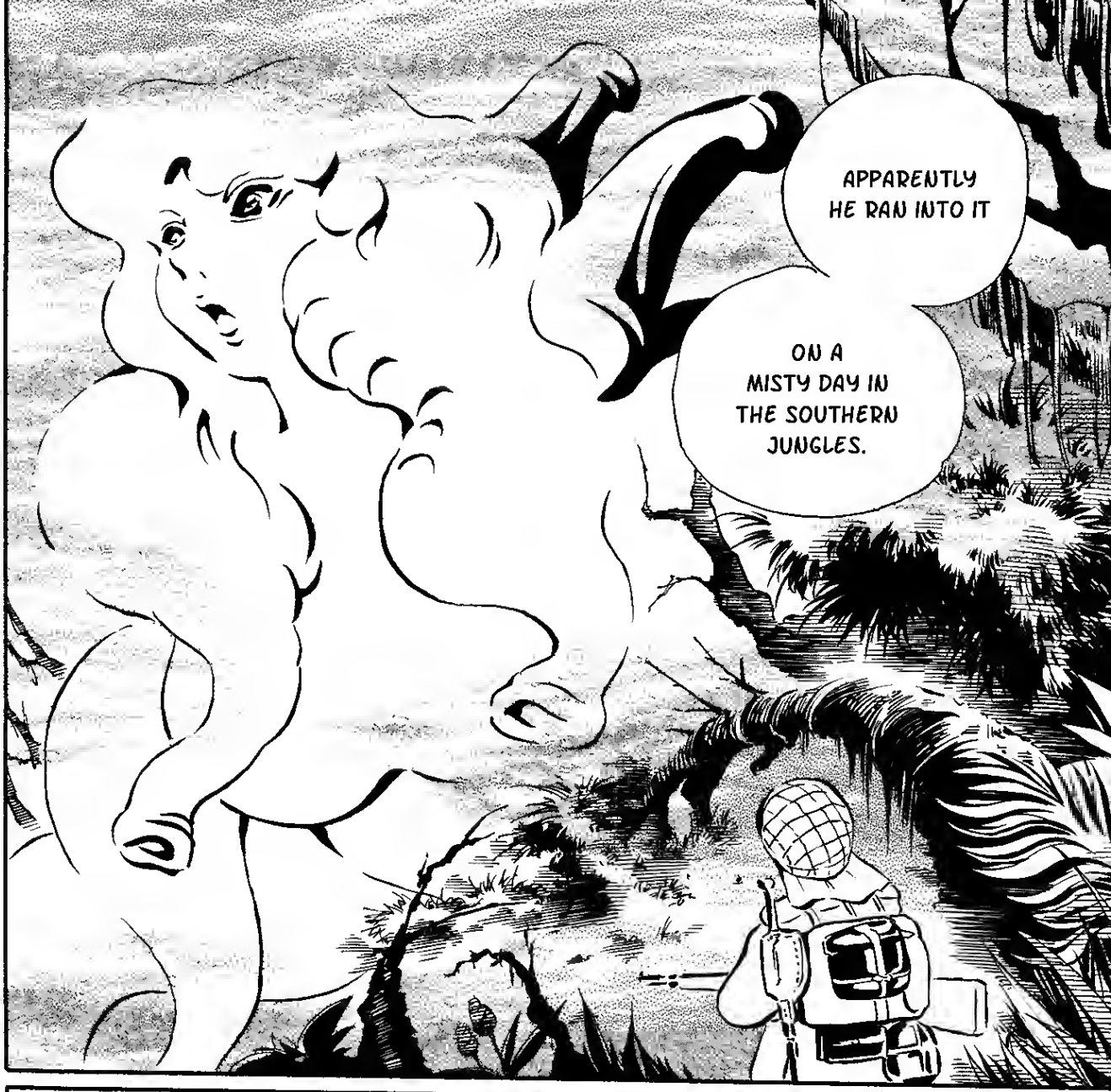

DON'T MENTION IT.
AS LONG AS YOU COULD BE OF USE TO US.

AYE.
THE MATTER OF YOUR ONLY SON, RIGHT?

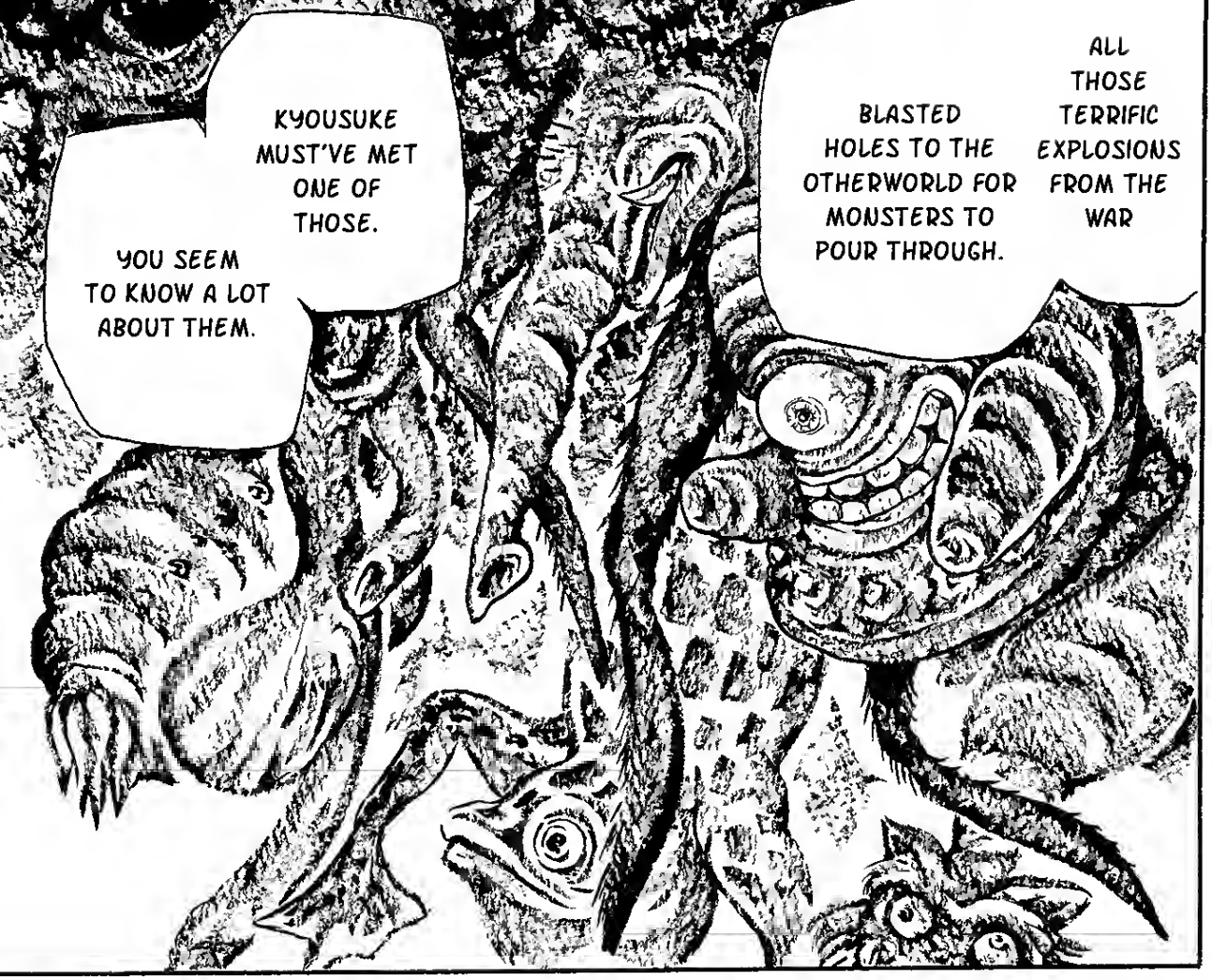
HE'S THE HEIR OF THE OOKAMI FAMILY.
OOKAMI KYOUSUKE IS HIS NAME.
HE WAS DEPLOYED TO THE SOUTH, YOU SEE, AND WHILE HE RETURNED SAFE AND SOUND—

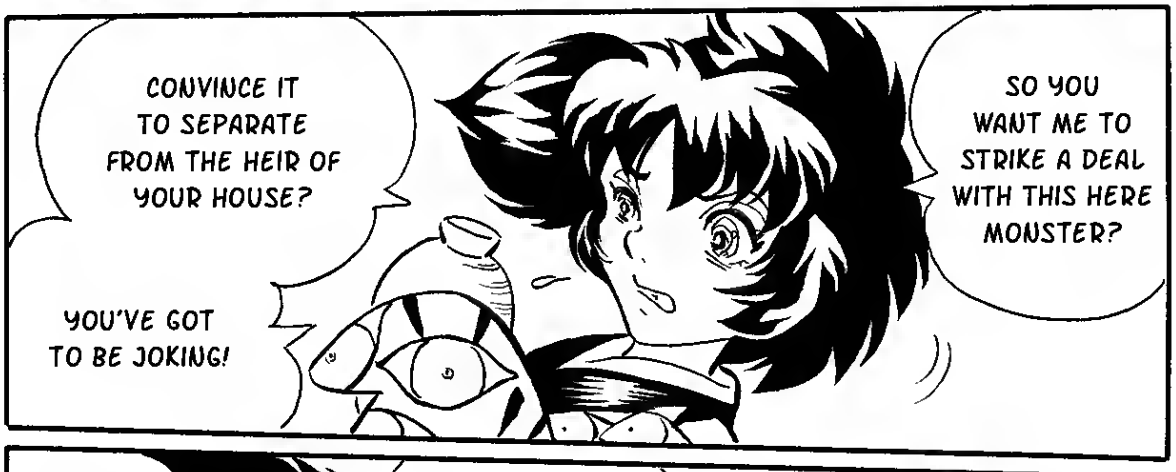

WELL, WELL...
POSSESSED BY A MONSTER, YOU SAY?
THAT'S CORRECT.
I COULD SCARCELY BELIEVE IT MYSELF—


UNTIL I SAW HIM WITH MY OWN EYES.


APPARENTLY HE RAN INTO IT
ON A MISTY DAY IN THE SOUTHERN JUNGLES.

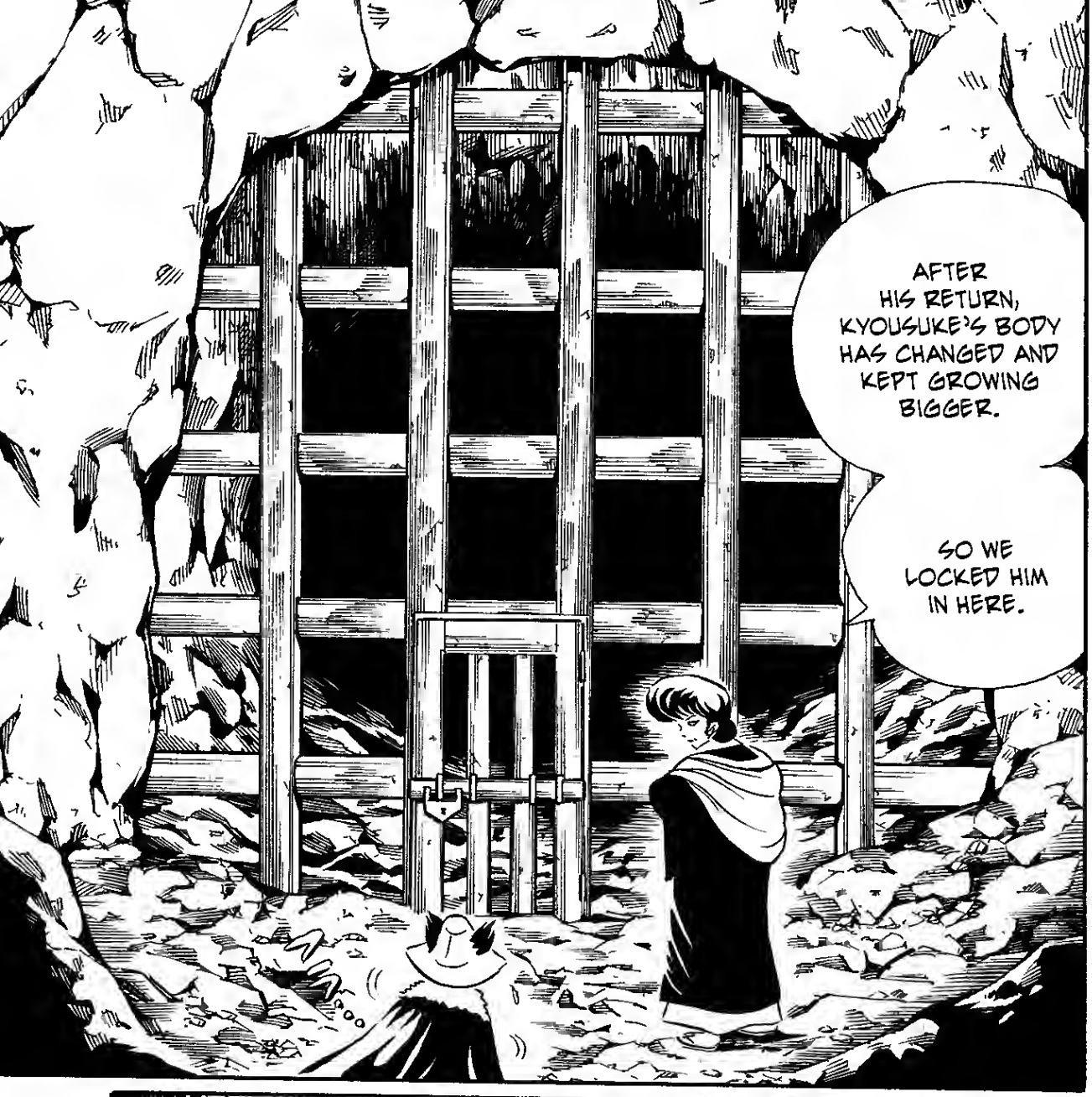
THEN ONE DAY I HEARD ABOUT YOU.
AS KYOUSUKE'S UNCLE, I WAS QUITE WORRIED ABOUT HIM.

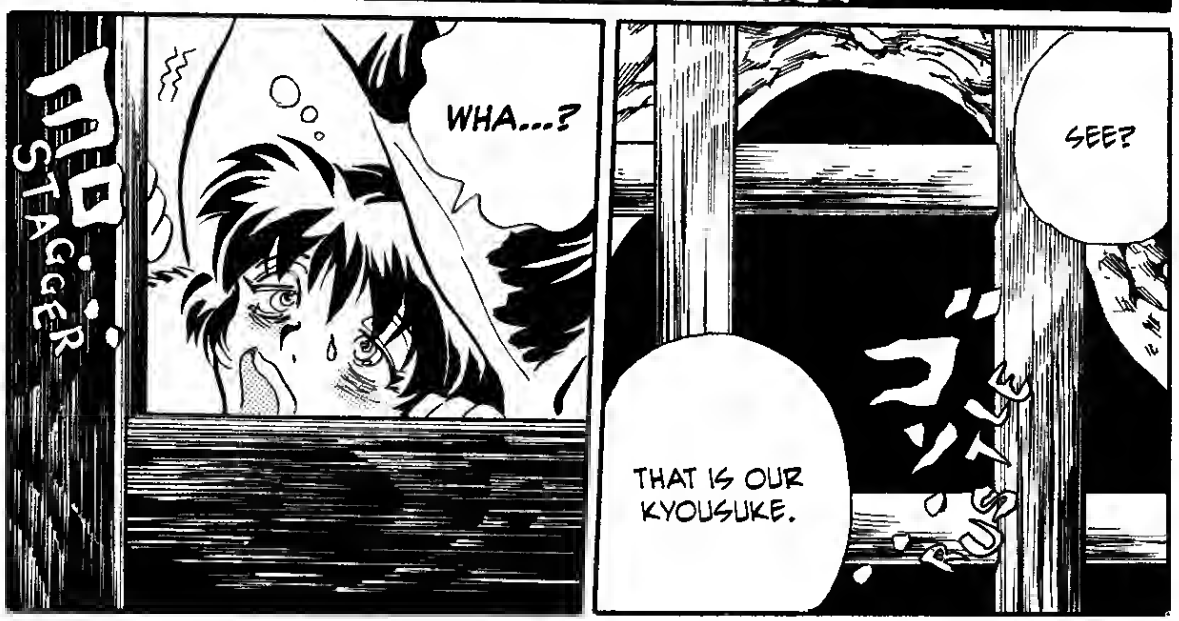

ALL THOSE TERRIFIC EXPLOSIONS FROM THE WAR
BLASTED HOLES TO THE OTHERWORLD FOR MONSTERS TO POUR THROUGH.
KYOUSUKE MUST'VE MET ONE OF THOSE.
YOU SEEM TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT THEM.


SO YOU WANT ME TO STRIKE A DEAL WITH THIS HERE MONSTER?
CONVINCE IT TO SEPARATE FROM THE HEIR OF YOUR HOUSE?
YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING!

PLEASE, I BEG OF YOU.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS MEET KYOUSUKE.
GOOD GRIEF...
SIGH
YOU'LL BE AMPLY REWARDED.

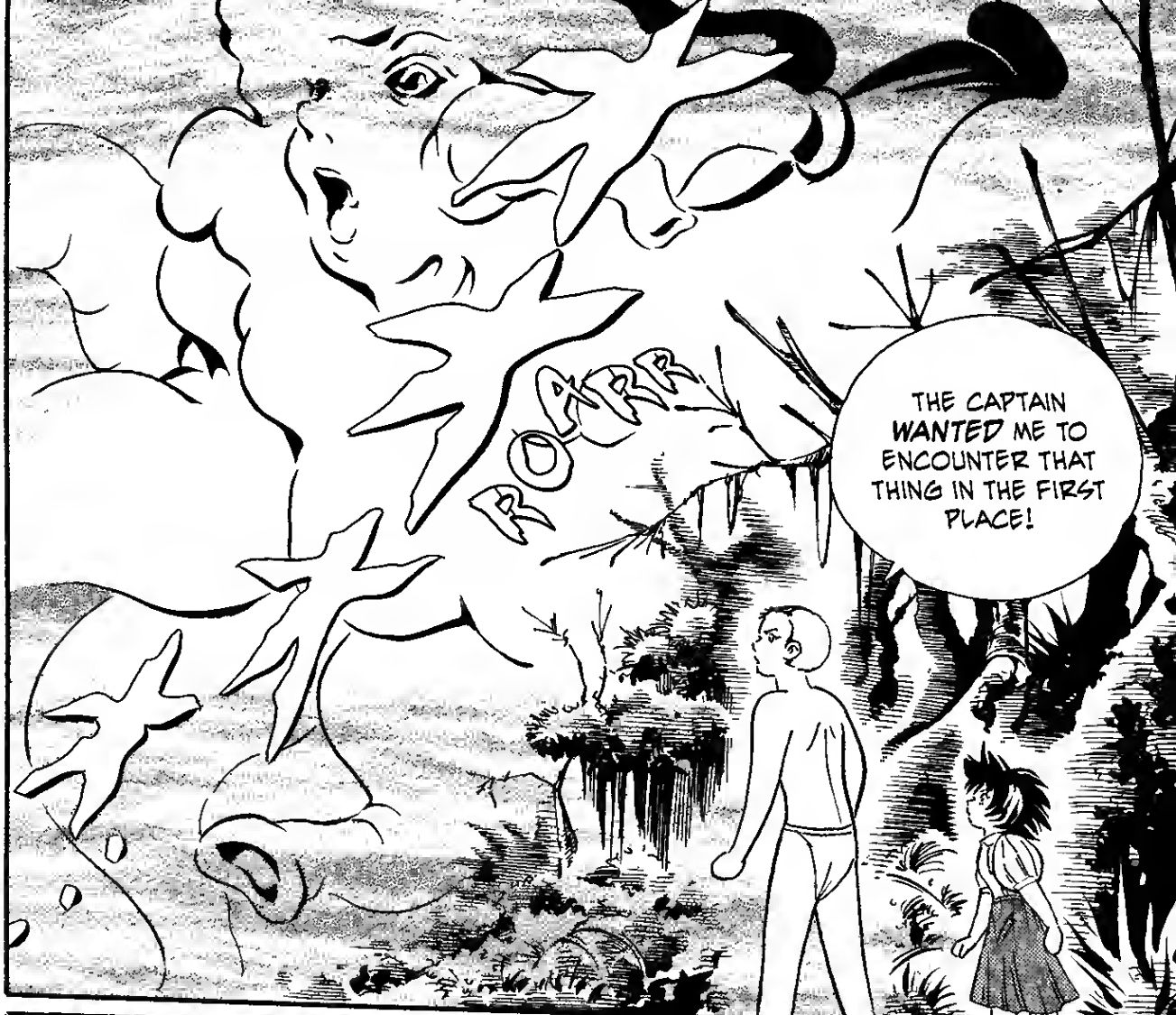
MY DECISION TO LEAVE THE CITY FOR A CHANGE OF SCENE
MIGHT'VE BEEN 'CAUSE I FELT SO LONELY AFTER ANEGO LEFT.
BUT I SOON REALIZED HOW FOOLISH I'D BEEN TO LAND MYSELF IN THIS TROUBLE.
THAT LIQUOR WAS A TRIFLE STRONG.
SORRY MA'AM, BUT I'M FEELING DIZZY.
PANT PANT
RIGHT THIS WAY! KYOUSUKE IS WAITING FOR US.
TRY TO KEEP UP, NOW.
PANT
PANT
PANT...
WE HAD THE VILLAGERS CARVE THE MOUNTAIN AND INSTALLED A JAIL.
HERE WE ARE.


AFTER HIS RETURN, KYOUSUKE'S BODY HAS CHANGED AND KEPT GROWING BIGGER.
SO WE LOCKED HIM IN HERE.


SEE?
ゴゴゴゴ
THAT IS OUR KYOUSUKE.
WHA...?
STAGGER

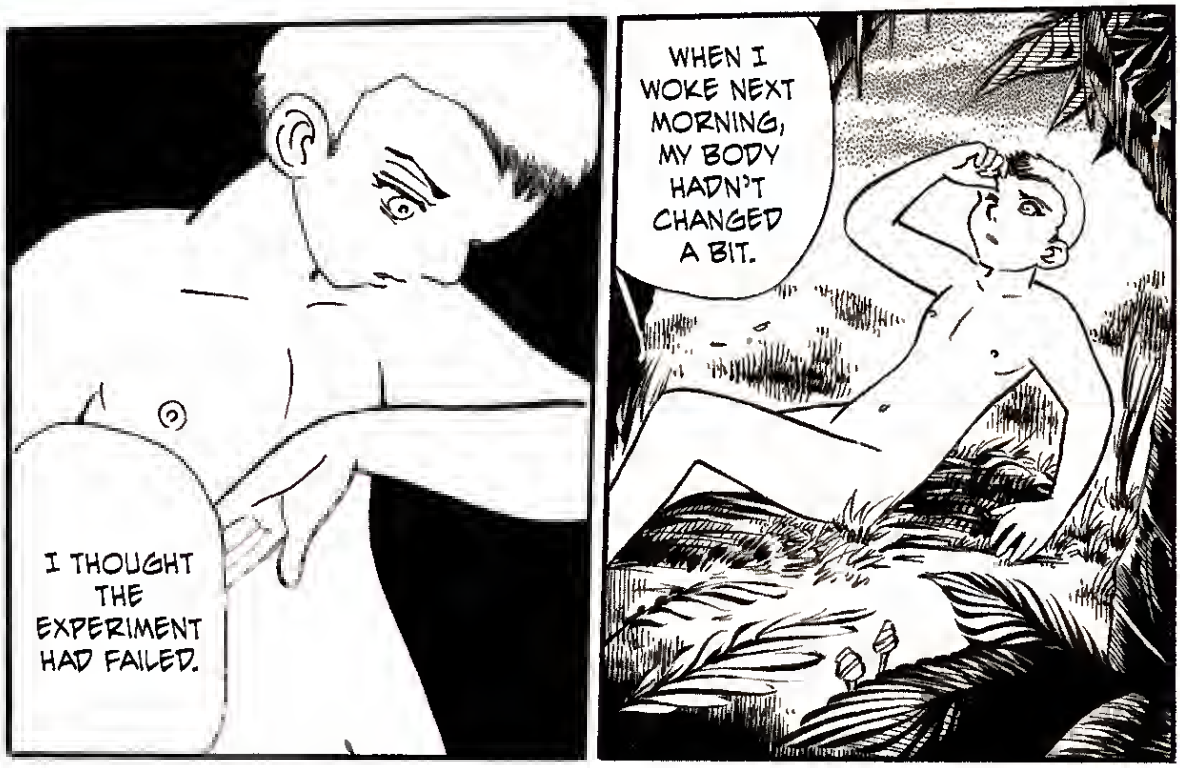
H-HUH...?
WHERE AM I?
WE'RE IN THE SOUTHERN JUNGLES.
THIS IS THE PLACE I WAS SENT TO AS A SOLDIER.

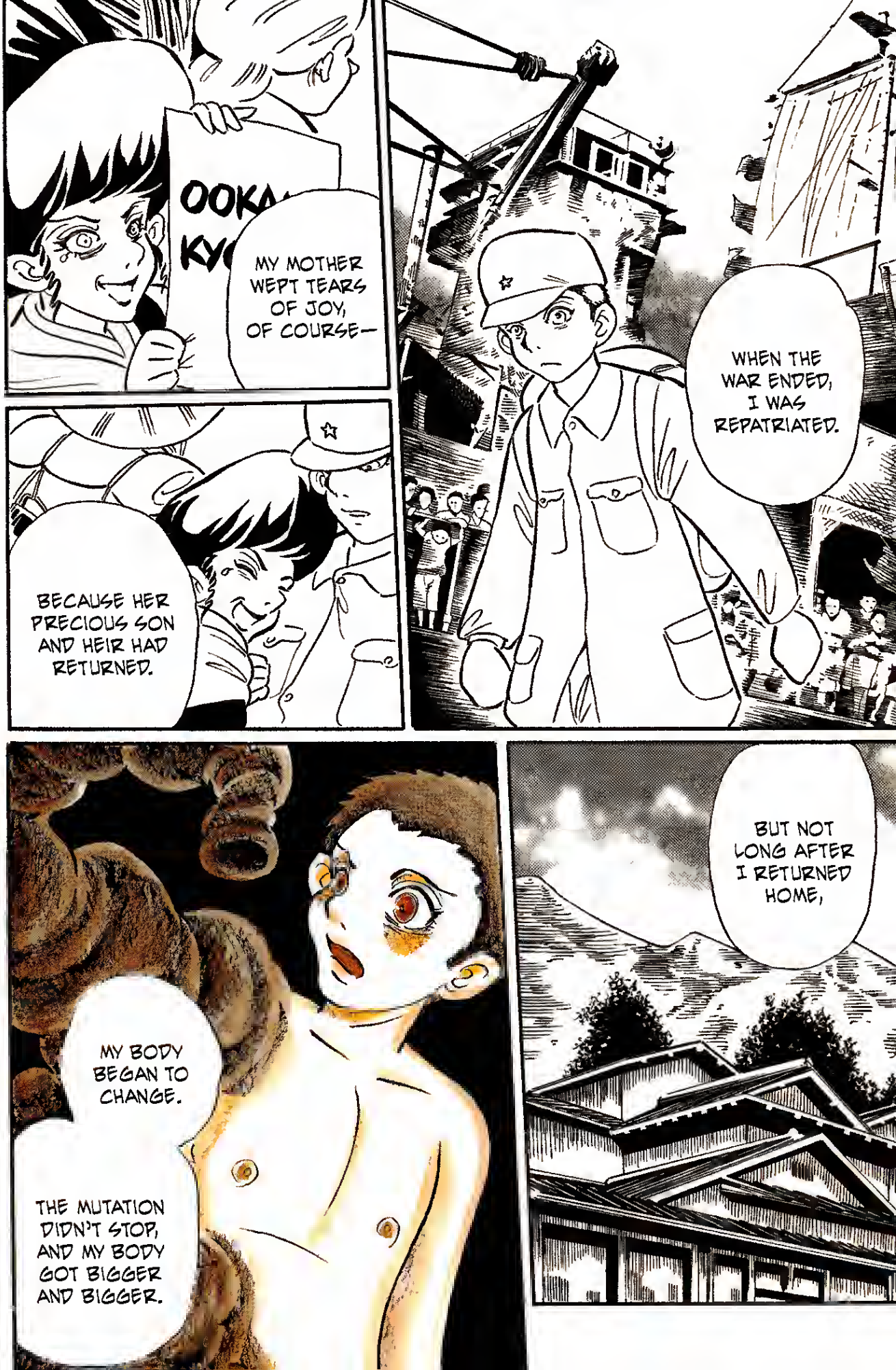
UNDERSTOOD, CAPTAIN!
HUH...? UH, YESSIR...
YOU'RE DOING IT NAKED, SO TAKE OFF YOUR UNIFORM. AND LEAVE YOUR GUN BEHIND.
PRIVATE OOKAMI, YOU'LL STAND GUARD ALONE TONIGHT.
I THOUGHT IT WAS THE USUAL BULLYING, BUT I WAS WRONG.
Heh
RUSTLE
IT'S HERE!
H-HEY... WAIT A SEC!
ARE YOU OOKAMI KYOUSUKE?


ROARR
THE CAPTAIN WANTED ME TO ENCOUNTER THAT THING IN THE FIRST PLACE!

THE ARMY WAS TRYING TO MAKE INVINCIBLE SOLDIERS
BY COMBINING MONSTERS AND SOLDIERS IN EXPERIMENTS.

AAAHH!!

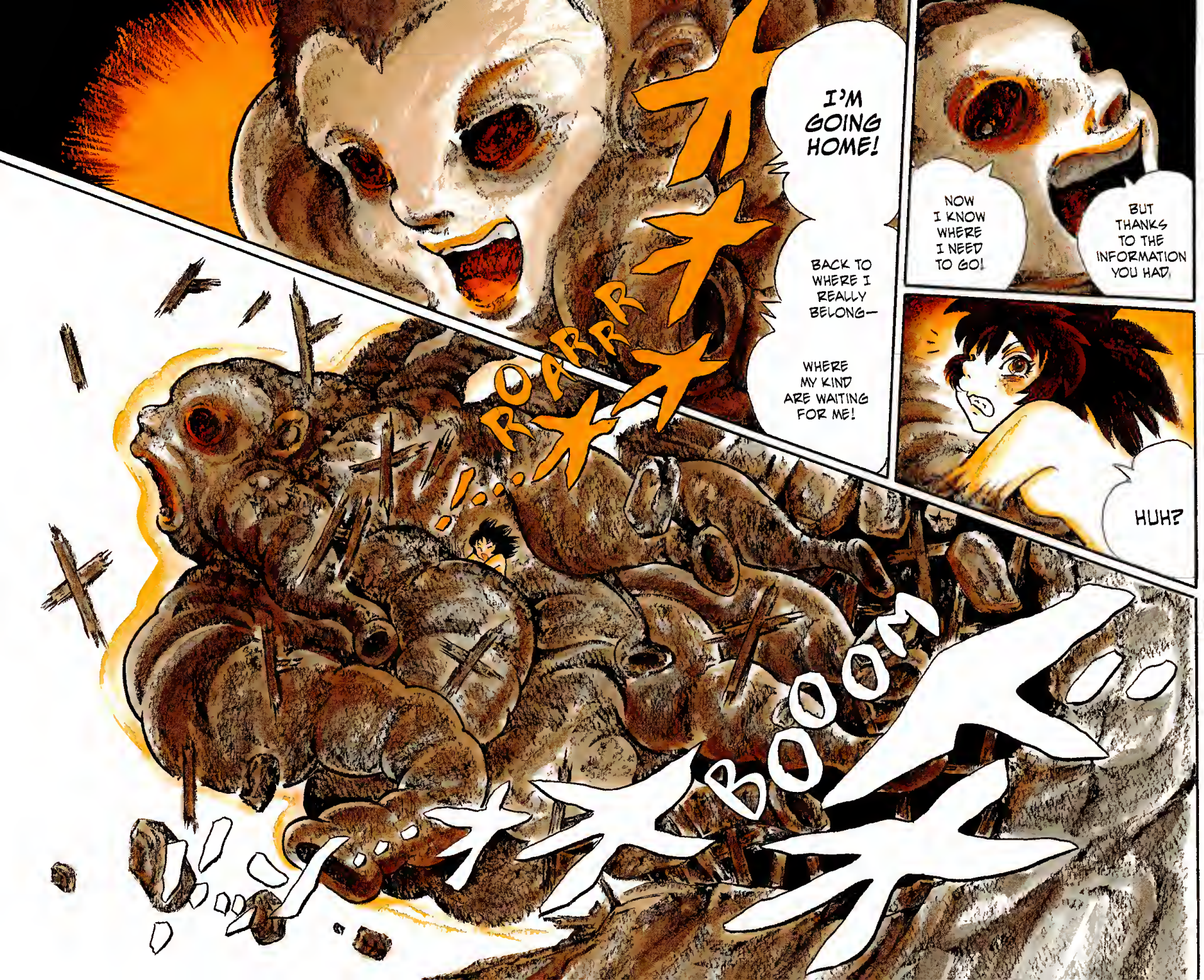

I THOUGHT THE EXPERIMENT HAD FAILED.
WHEN I WOKE NEXT MORNING, MY BODY HADN'T CHANGED A BIT.


MY MOTHER WEPT TEARS OF JOY, OF COURSE—
WHEN THE WAR ENDED, I WAS REPATRIATED.
BECAUSE HER PRECIOUS SON AND HEIR HAD RETURNED.
BUT NOT LONG AFTER I RETURNED HOME,
MY BODY BEGAN TO CHANGE.
THE MUTATION DIDN'T STOP, AND MY BODY GOT BIGGER AND BIGGER.

AT LEAST MAKE A CHILD WHILE YOU CAN! WE NEED AN HEIR WITH A NORMAL BODY!
I'LL FIND YOU A BRIDE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!!
WHAT SHALL WE DO!? WHO WILL LEAD THE OOKAMI FAMILY NOW!?
THEY WERE LURED BY THE FOOD, OBVIOUSLY.
SO SHE INVITED GIRLS WITHOUT FAMILIES TO OUR VILLAGE.
DOES THAT MEAN—ME TOO?
N-NOW JUST A MINUTE!

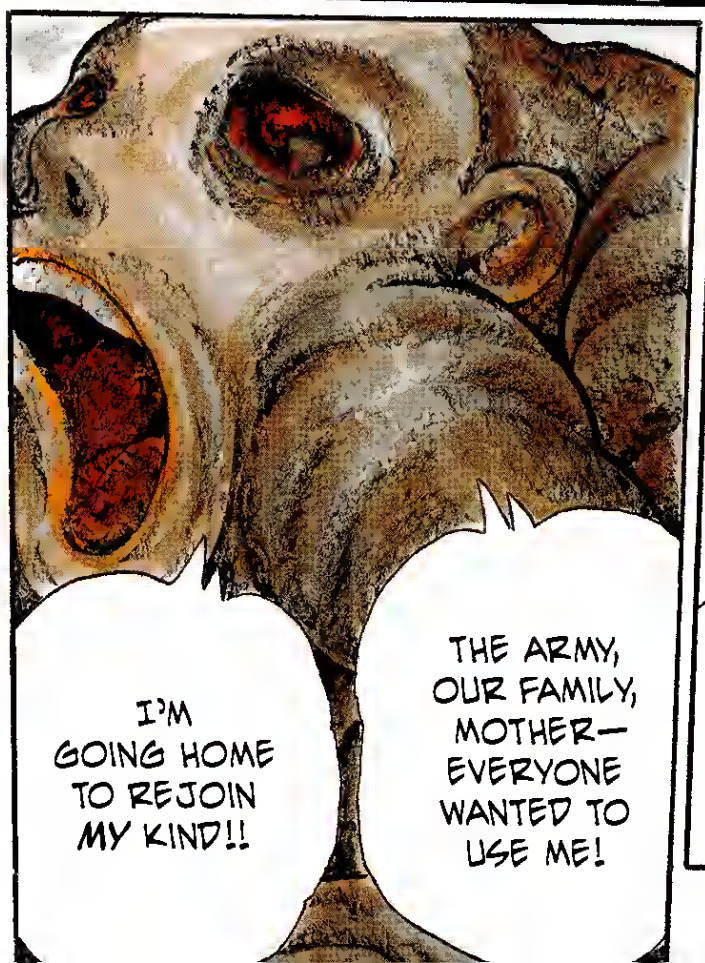
THAT'S RIGHT. LIKE ALL THE PREVIOUS GIRLS.
YOU WERE DRUGGED BY MY MOTHER.
LOOK, KYOUSUKE!
I BROUGHT YOU A NEW BRIDE!!
ぎゃあああ
STEP

WE'RE INSIDE ME.
SHIT! WHERE ARE WE, THEN!?
YOU AND I HAVE MERGED.
GASP
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SPECIAL, THOUGH.
YOU HAVEN'T LOST YOUR SOUL LIKE THE OTHER GIRLS I ABSORBED... AND YOU'RE STILL YOURSELF.
DAMMIT! HOW DARE YOU!?

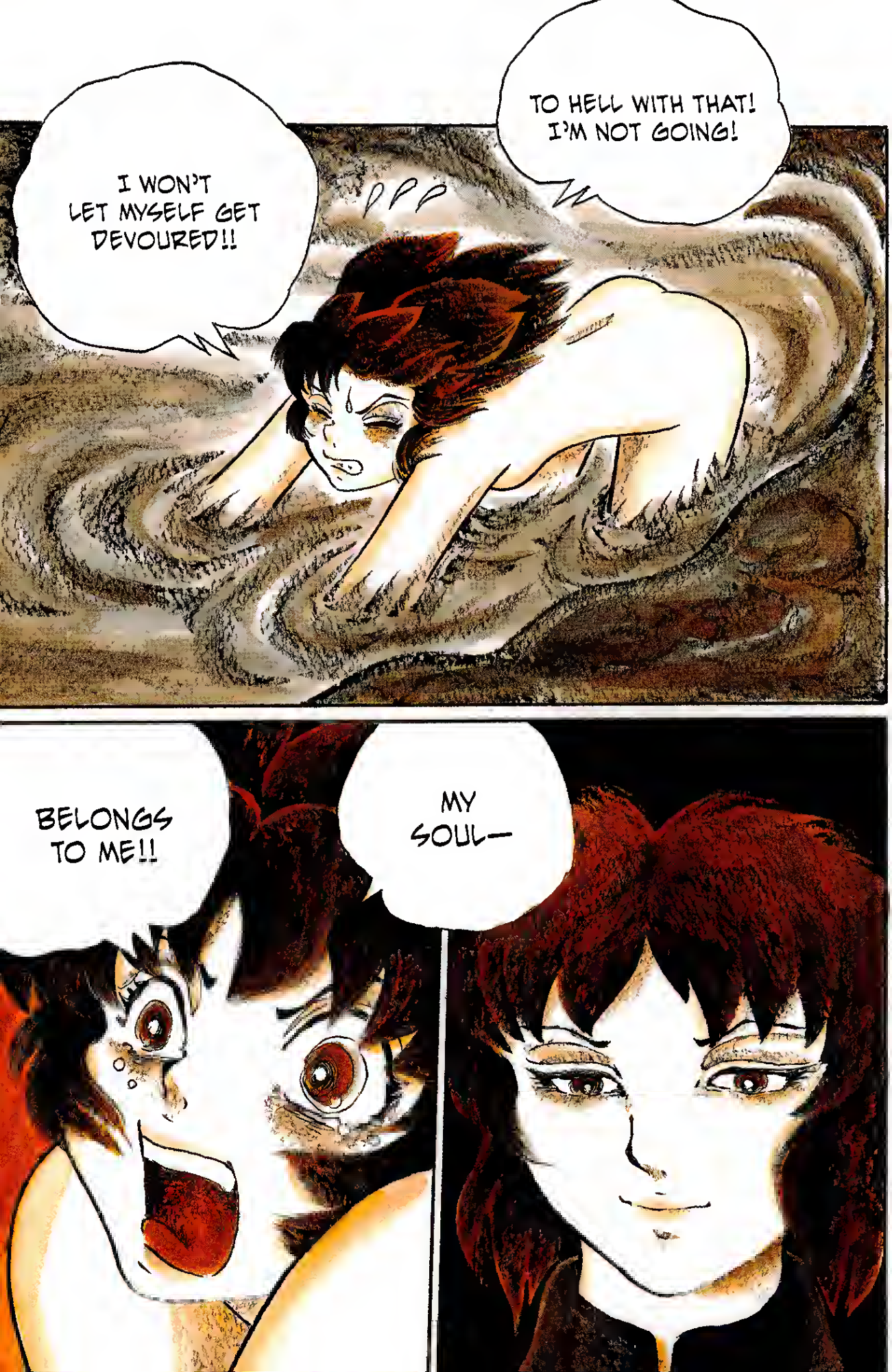

I'M GOING HOME!
BACK TO WHERE I REALLY BELONG—
WHERE MY KIND ARE WAITING FOR ME!
ROARRR
NOW I KNOW WHERE I NEED TO GO!
BUT THANKS TO THE INFORMATION YOU HAD,
HUH?
BOOM

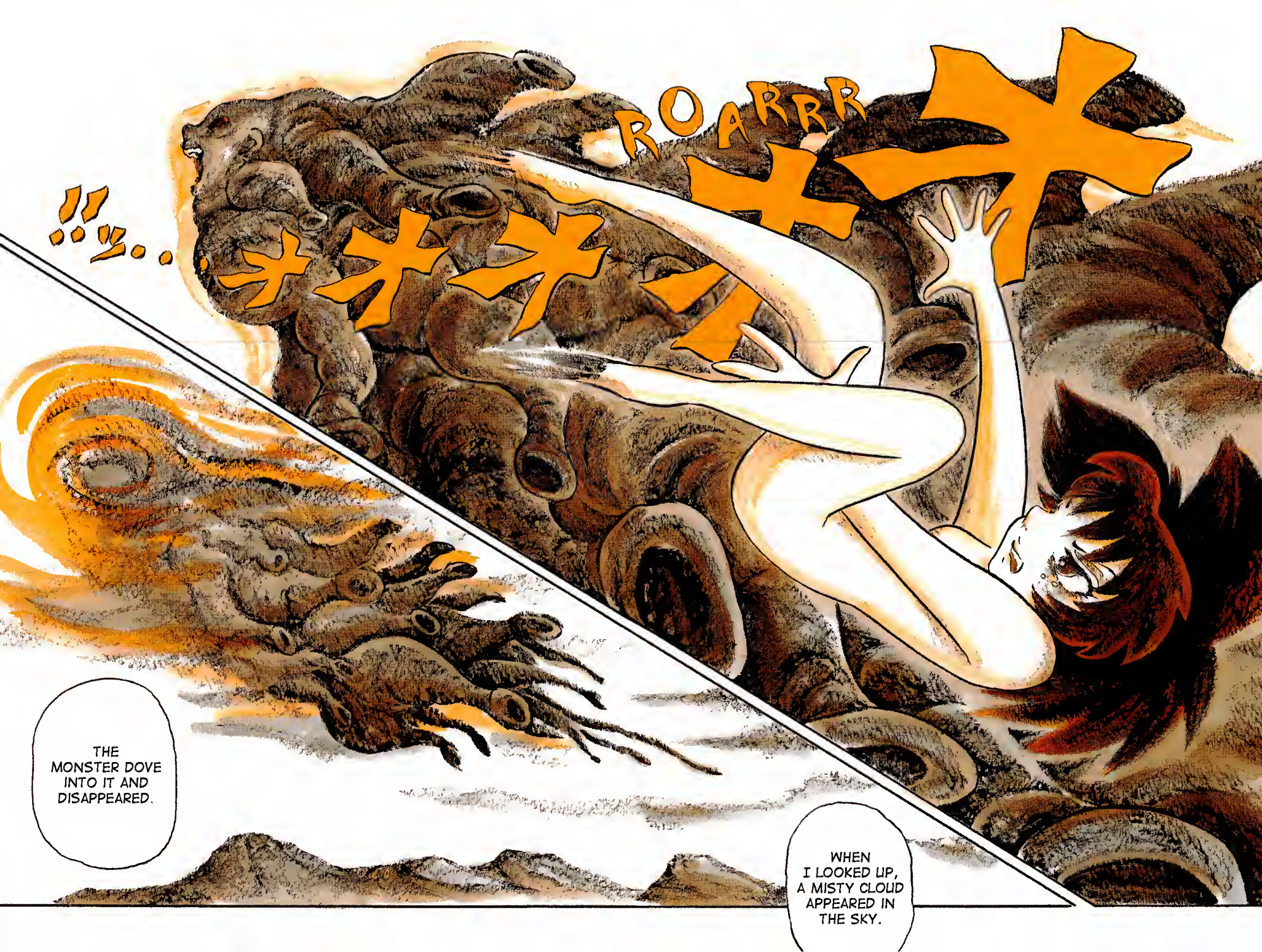
ROARR

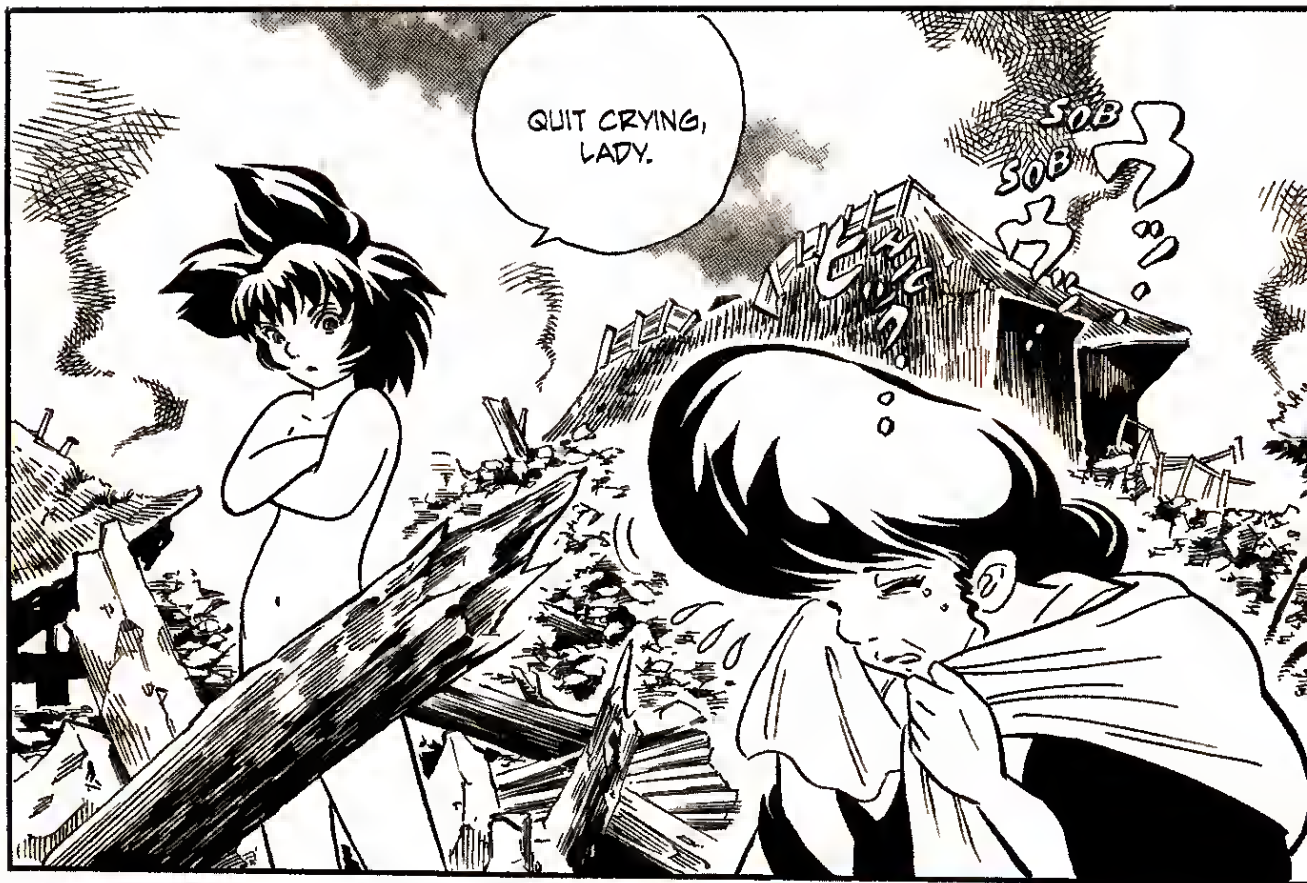
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
HEEELP!!
YEEEK!
IT'S A MONSTER!!

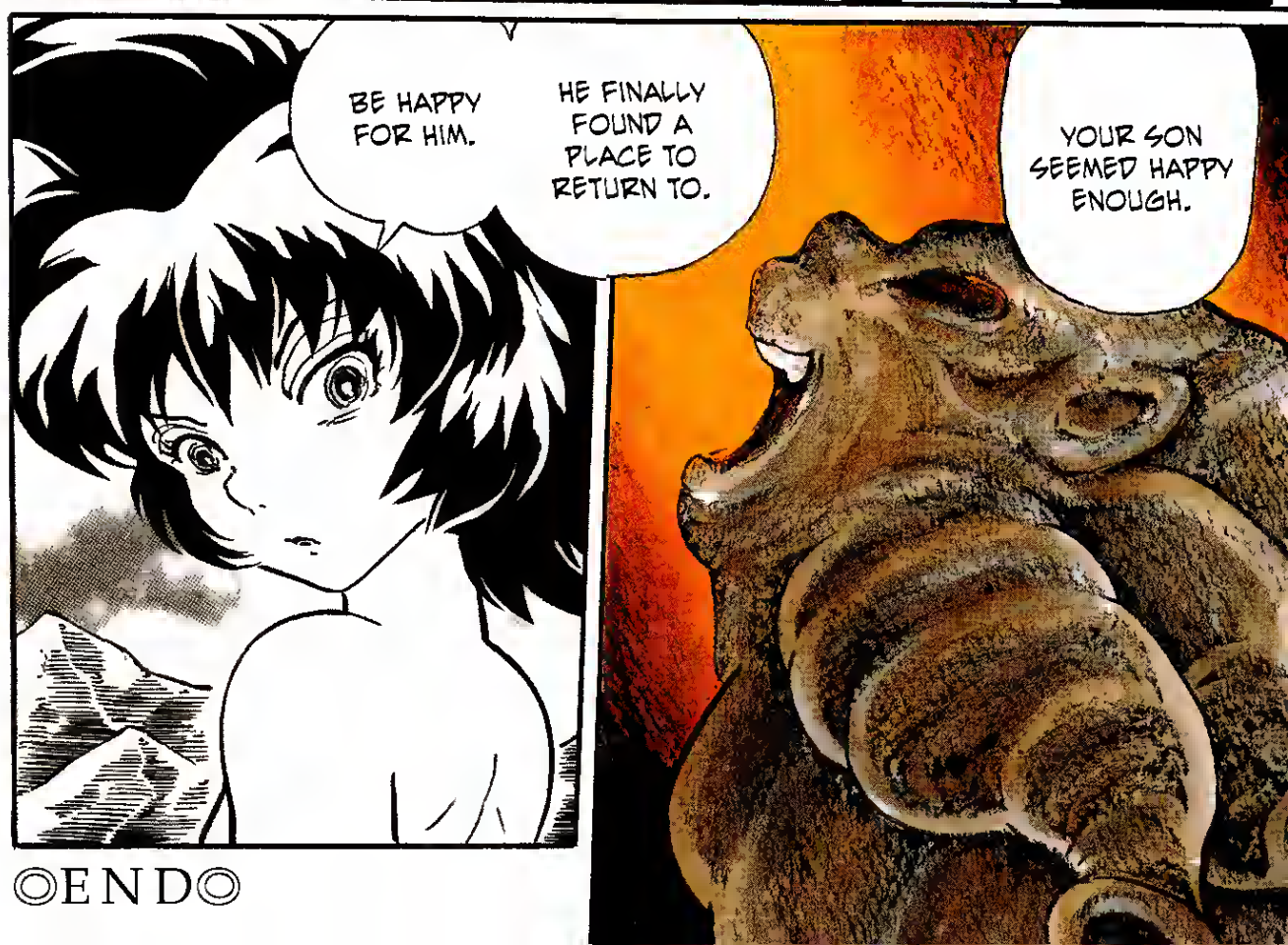

I'M GOING HOME TO REJOIN MY KIND!!
THE ARMY, OUR FAMILY, MOTHER— EVERYONE WANTED TO USE ME!

DON'T RUN AWAY! WHAT ABOUT OUR FAMILY?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, KYOUSUKE!? YOU'RE OUR PRECIOUS HEIR!
COME BACK! YOU MUST COME BACK!!


I WON'T LET MYSELF GET DEVOURED!!
TO HELL WITH THAT! I'M NOT GOING!
BELONGS TO ME!!
MY SOUL—


ROARRR
!!..
オオオ
THE MONSTER DOVE INTO IT AND DISAPPEARED.
WHEN I LOOKED UP, A MISTY CLOUD APPEARED IN THE SKY.


QUIT CRYING, LADY.
SOB
SOB


BE HAPPY FOR HIM.
HE FINALLY FOUND A PLACE TO RETURN TO.
YOUR SON SEEMED HAPPY ENOUGH.

◎END◎

Afterwrod

I wanted to draw a volume with some unifying theme, so I made it a collection of stories about the Improbable City. It all began with the second story, "Family" – which, if I recall, was based on a contemporary ghost story (?) or quasi-urban legend: a mother fleeing the fires of war turns to see a stranger's child holding her hand.

Then I expanded my imagination and decided that I wanted to do something similar to Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos... grotesque beings from another dimension would begin invading the Earth while humans are occupied with war. That's why I named "The Call of the Improbable City" after "The Call of Cthulhu", and the monster in "The Bride of the Ookami Family" was modeled after the creature in "The Dunwich Horror".

The giant jellyfish in "A Tale of the Sky" were inspired by the stories of mysterious floating creatures in the stratosphere (the stratosphere was a largely unexplored region in the late 19th to early 20th centuries), though I can't remember if their author was Conan Doyle or H. G. Wells.

The first story, "Fairy Tale", is set much later in the postwar era. Shao Tsu is visibly more mature and it's chronologically the final episode in this volume.

Just to clarify, Shao Tsu was talking to herself when she returned home. Tenome was not in the room. The food on the table had been prepared by Shao Tsu herself before she left for work. I decided that Shao Tsu should strike out on her own in this volume. What lies ahead for Shao Tsu, and whether Tenome will ever appear again, I haven't the faintest idea.

End

ものの計算紙 四

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第26話 家族	（デジタルホラーM Vol.001 '10 9月配信）
第27話 非存在街 幻の少女	（デジタルホラーM Vol.002 '10 10月配信）
第28話 非存在街の呼び声	（デジタルホラーM Vol.003 '10 11月配信）
第29話 霧の夜の子供たち	（デジタルホラーM Vol.004 '10 12月配信）
第30話 空の怪	（デジタルホラーM Vol.005 '11 1月配信）
第31話 大神家の花嫁	（デジタルホラーM Vol.006 '11 2月配信）

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